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**SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS'  
CONCEPTIONS OF MUSIC IN AND  
OUT OF SCHOOL :**

CONFORMING OR CONFLICTING  
MEANINGS.

*~~In Search of Musical Meaning~~*

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the various musical conceptions of contemporary secondary pupils. Today, musical production and consumption are rapidly increasing and dominating the lives of most young people. At the same time, music educators are challenged with the continuing unpopularity of music in the classroom. Despite the inclusive framework upon which the National Curriculum is based, music in schools remains meaningless to a number of pupils. While efforts have been made to understand the various relationships that pupils have with music, there is a need to ground this knowledge within the subjective views and perceptions of the pupils.

Inspired by a combination of approaches (the pupil voice, phenomenography, constructivist-interpretivist), this research aims to provide a contemporary empirical exploration of pupils' relationship to music. Phenomenography upholds that individual pupils' conceptions of particular school subjects can inform educators about the teaching and learning strategies that we should develop. This research builds critically upon that position, in order to map, compare and contrast the various conceptions that pupils hold towards music. It furthermore sets out to gain insight into the pupils' present musical desires and needs by asking them to construct their ideal curriculum for music. The study explored the views of eighty-seven pupils from six schools across England, through a series of in-depth interviews held within the school site. From this larger sample, data from thirty-four pupils were selected for detailed analysis and presentation in this thesis.

One of the main claims which this thesis argues is that school music's popularity is dependent on the degree to which pupils' own musical meanings are incorporated into the classroom. Findings suggest that the pupils' conceptions of music comprise

six categories, each of which relate to the use and value it serves in their lives. I refer to these conceptions as their musical meanings. It was also found that whilst the pupils' conceptions of school music do not relate to their musical meanings, their ideal curriculum for music acted as a gateway within which their musical meanings were offered access.

This thesis aims to contribute to the extant literature by providing a contemporary empirical basis through which to critically explore the musical conceptions of young people in relation to education. It aims to suggest a new path for discovery in music education, opening the door to further investigation.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	4
LIST OF FIGURES .....	8
LIST OF TABLES .....	8
GLOSSARY .....	9
 <b>PART I: BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH AGENDA .....</b>	<b>10</b>
 PREAMBLE .....	11
 <b>CHAPTER 1: CONCERNS IN MUSIC EDUCATION .....</b>	<b>13</b>
 OUTLINING THE SITUATION; ADDRESSING THE CONCERNS .....	13
RATIONALE AND FOCUS OF THE STUDY .....	17
THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL BASIS OF THE STUDY .....	18
CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE .....	19
THESIS OVERVIEW .....	20
 <b>CHAPTER 2: MUSIC IN SCHOOL – A CRITICAL REVIEW .....</b>	<b>21</b>
 THE INTRODUCTION OF THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM .....	21
PUPILS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS TO MUSIC IN SCHOOLS .....	28
CONCERNS WITH MUSIC EDUCATION AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL .....	29
SUMMARY .....	45
 <b>PART II: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>47</b>
 <b>CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS, RESEARCH DESIGN, DATA COLLECTION AND PILOT .....</b>	<b>48</b>
 INTRODUCTION .....	48

THE 'PUPIL VOICE' .....	49
PHENOMENOGRAPHY .....	50
CASE STUDY STRATEGY – CONSIDERATIONS AND CHOICES .....	58
SAFEGUARDING RESEARCH CREDIBILITY: RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY .....	76
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS .....	77
PILOT STUDY .....	78
RESEARCH BIAS AND LIMITATIONS .....	83
SHORTCOMINGS IN APPROACH .....	83
CONCLUSION .....	84
 PART III: FINDINGS .....	 85
 CHAPTER 4: WHAT MUSIC MEANS TO PUPILS .....	 86
INTRODUCTION .....	86
CONCEPTIONS OF MUSIC OUT OF SCHOOL .....	87
MUSIC AS EXPRESSION OF EMOTION AND FEELINGS .....	92
MUSIC AS MOOD, RELAXATION, RELEASE AND REFUGE .....	102
MUSIC AS COMMUNICATION .....	108
MUSIC AS COMMUNITY; TOGETHERNESS .....	112
MUSIC AS IDENTITY .....	116
MUSIC AS ENTERTAINMENT AND PLEASURE .....	124
LEVELS OF MEANING .....	130
SUMMARY .....	133
 CHAPTER 5: WHAT SCHOOL MUSIC MEANS TO PUPILS .....	 135
CONCEPTIONS OF MUSIC IN SCHOOL .....	135
MUSICAL MEANING AND EXPERIENCE IN THE CLASSROOM .....	138
COMPARISON OF CONCEPTIONS OF MUSIC IN AND OUT OF SCHOOL .....	150
SUMMARY .....	152

**CHAPTER 6: WHEN MUSIC IS MEANINGFUL . . . . .154**

MY MOST MEANINGFUL MUSICAL EXPERIENCE . . . . .	154
JOEY'S MOST MEANINGFUL MUSICAL EXPERIENCE . . . . .	156
MARY'S MOST MEANINGFUL MUSICAL EXPERIENCE . . . . .	160
BOB'S MOST MEANINGFUL MUSICAL EXPERIENCE . . . . .	164
MATHILDA'S MOST MEANINGFUL MUSICAL EXPERIENCE . . . . .	168
ZIAN'S MOST MEANINGFUL MUSICAL EXPERIENCE . . . . .	171
HALINA'S MOST MEANINGFUL MUSICAL EXPERIENCE . . . . .	174
DISCUSSION . . . . .	176
SUMMARY . . . . .	179

**CHAPTER 7: THE PUPILS' VISION OF THE IDEAL MUSIC CURRICULUM . 180**

GATEWAYS TO MEANING . . . . .	180
GATEWAY TO THE PERSONAL LEVEL . . . . .	180
GATEWAY TO THE SOCIAL LEVEL . . . . .	187
TWO-WAY DIALOGUE: THE PUPIL VOICE; THE TEACHER AS FACILITATOR . . . . .	188
GATEWAY TO THE COMMUNAL (COMMUNITY) LEVEL . . . . .	191
AUTHENTICITY AND REAL EXPERIENCES . . . . .	193
UNIFICATION VERSUS FRAGMENTATION . . . . .	197
RECOGNITION OF 'MUSICKING' AND INFORMAL LEARNING . . . . .	201
THE CONCEPT OF MEANING AND EXPERIENCE WITHIN THE CURRICULUM . . . . .	206
POLICY VS. PRACTICE: CONFORMING OR CONFLICTING MEANINGS? . . . . .	211
CONCLUSION . . . . .	213

**CHAPTER 8: LIMITATIONS, CONTRIBUTION AND OUTLOOK . . . . .214**

CLASSROOM AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS . . . . .	220
OUTLOOK AND FUTURE RESEARCH . . . . .	222
CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS . . . . .	223

<b>APPENDICES</b> .....	<b>225</b>
APPENDIX A: BASIC STRUCTURE OF INTRODUCTION TO THE PUPILS .....	226
APPENDIX B: DESCRIPTION OF THE PUPILS .....	227
APPENDIX C: SCHEMES OF WORK: SCHOOL 1 .....	230
APPENDIX D: SCHEMES OF WORK: SCHOOL 2 .....	237
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	<b>242</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Diagram of Musical Experience (Green, 1988, p. 138) .....	139
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## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Examination of Arts Subjects at GCSE as a Proportion of the Cohort .....	27
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## GLOSSARY

**Programme of study** – a subject document that generally sets out the knowledge, skills and understanding to be taught and learned in a subject at a specific key stage.

**Key stage** – the division of schooling into four age categories,

**Key Stage 1** (ages 5–7)

**Key Stage 2** (ages 7–11)

**Key Stage 3** (ages 11–14)

**Key Stage 4** (ages 14–16).

**Teaching requirements** – in England and Wales in particular, the statement beginning 'pupils should be taught' that indicates specific elements of knowledge, skill and understanding within a subject that should be taught to pupils

**Attainment targets** – are statements which sets out the knowledge, skills and understanding which pupils of different abilities and maturities are expected to have by the end of each key stage.

**Scheme of work** – a non-statutory set of units for learning and teaching many of the requirements of the programme of study.

**GCSE** - The General Certificate of Secondary Education

# **PART I: BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH AGENDA**

## PREAMBLE

The short story entitled 'Winter Oak' by Yuri Nagibin contains a potent message pertaining to the importance of valuing and recognising the unique and individual experiences and meanings that each child possesses. The story describes the experiences of a successful teacher and her reckless pupil, during their journey through the forest. Following the child, the teacher is confronted by a new world and a new perspective, and subsequently realises how narrow her own world was. After the journey, the teacher no longer sees her pupil as reckless, but as someone who is unique – who has his own unique meanings and perspective of life – someone from whom she too can learn.

Learning within the environment of a school is often linear and one-dimensional, with predetermined and selected knowledge imparted to the children. Learning, however, is not a process that is confined to the classroom environment: it occurs within a variety of contexts and is happening constantly. Likewise, according to the National Curriculum, the foundation of any school system that strives to espouse an inclusive agenda ought to incorporate an understanding of and sensitivity towards the plurality of experiences and meanings that each child brings into the classroom. By focusing on the one-dimensional context of the school, we are excluding a large part of what makes us each unique – we are excluding what makes us human. Gaining insight into the conceptions of the pupils can create a basis upon which we can begin to understand and enter into their worlds.

This dissertation focuses on music and explores what music means to pupils. It explores this via the various conceptions that secondary pupils have towards music.

I wish that teachers would just listen to us or just see what we can do. I mean, I think that everyone is musical in a way but what music is for me may not be what music is for them. I think this is the problem. If I could just show them!

Karly (age 13)



## CHAPTER 1: CONCERNS IN MUSIC EDUCATION

### OUTLINING THE SITUATION; ADDRESSING THE CONCERNS

Thirteen years after Music has securely confirmed a space for itself within the National Curriculum, there is widespread concern amongst music educators in the UK that music may not be serving the majority of pupils effectively in meeting the demands espoused within the inclusive agenda.

Empirical evidence suggests that music is the least favourite and enjoyed subject (Ross, 1995; Harland *et al.*, 2000). Evidence further suggests that as pupils progress through the school system, they tend to identify less with school music (O'Neill *et al.*, 2002). Moreover, the consistently low GCSE music uptake rates indicate that once pupils have completed their compulsory requirement for music in schools, they choose to drop it (OFSTED, 1998, 2004; Bray, 2000). Research by Mills (1997), Coll (1998) and Cox (1999) suggests that music in schools at the secondary level has the greatest problem of teacher retention. Although recent empirical work by Lamont *et al.* (2002) suggests that the situation is not as bad as earlier reports indicate, most recent official figures indicate that not much has changed. GCSE uptake rates remain stable and further investigation is needed to understand and counteract the continual decline in interest amongst pupils as they progress through the system (QCA, 2004).

The situation becomes provocative when one considers the vital role that music plays in the lives of young people outside of the school context. This is supported by a wealth of empirical evidence from youth and sub-cultural studies, sociology and music psychology.

Some authors argue that music appears to become a *problem* once it is institutionalised due to the conflicting conceptions held by the various players within the system (Pitts, 2001; Sloboda, 2001). Gammon (1996) adds to this by suggesting that the culture of school conflicts with the values and meanings attributed to out of school culture. In sum, the problem for pupils appears to rest in the disjuncture between the pupils' musical world in school and out of school.

In searching for solutions to provide an effective vehicle to musically educate all pupils, several authors have addressed the need to support and incorporate the musical knowledge, preferences, and values that the pupils bring into the classroom (Stålhammar, 2003; Kushner, 1999; Swanwick, 2002; Hargreaves and Boal, 2001; Campbell, 1988; Green, 1988, 1997, 2001, 2005a). Green further suggests that supporting pupils' musical meanings ought to form the core of an inclusive music educational agenda. Based on her theory of musical meaning, she suggests that the classroom ought to enable pupils to experience less *alienation* and more *celebration*. Lamont (2002) similarly proposes that music in schools ought to strive towards creating more positive identities within the classroom. This support should begin with an understanding of what music means to pupils, and application of what they know and value into the classroom. By understanding the musical meanings of pupils, teachers' musical assumptions can be challenged, thereby developing new paths for learning and creating common ground for understanding. This plea also accords with the work of Pitts (2001), as she calls for a common understanding of *musical meaning* amongst the various players. Without such an effort, music education would have failed in fulfilling its agenda.

In addition to the concerns outlined above, music has always played a critical role in my life as a learner, performer and teacher. I grew up in a musical family: my

grandmother was a piano teacher and my mother played the piano and flute. I always knew that music would play an integral role in my life. Music became my main means of communication and expression. At a very early age, I was given formal music lessons, which paved the way for my musical career thereafter. My parents invested greatly in my musical career, and sent me to music boarding schools, summer camps and festivals in Asia, Europe, and the USA. I completed my undergraduate degree in music performance and began performing chamber music around the world. However after a few years, my interest in children and music education began to outgrow my love of performing and I ended my performing career to dedicate my time entirely to this cause.

I also lived in a number of countries as a child, as my family moved every few years. I was introduced to a variety of musical traditions, languages and practices, each of which has influenced my own thinking and experience of music. Consequently, I had the opportunity to experience a range of music educational contexts.

My experiences as a supply (substitute) music teacher in England, the USA and Germany as a young adult showed me that music in schools was generally not a subject which appealed to young adolescents. It was often perceived as boring, a pastime or a break between more serious subjects. Those pupils who took music at school seriously were often those who were already formally involved in music outside of the school context or those who were preparing to take music for GCSE examinations (in the case of the British pupils).

On the other hand, my work as a youth worker and private music teacher revealed a contrasting picture of music and its relationship to youth. Music outside of the school context was a highly potent force within the lives of young individuals. The musical values, desires, meanings and experiences of young people today were often far

removed from what was offered within the school context. As a result, a process of exclusion took place. This exclusion occurred both explicitly on the part of the pupil (self-exclusion or dropping out) as well as implicitly on the part of the school by not being sensitive to the musical landscape of which several pupils are a part. During my work, I became very concerned with this distinct gap between the pupils' in- and out-of-school experiences, and interested in how this gap affected their musical experiences and the meanings they attached to them. I began to question the value of music education in the lives of the pupils, and our purpose as music educators. I felt a great need to attempt to understand the musical worlds of pupils in an effort to close the gap.

These concerns, which have culminated from my own personal experiences, as well as issues evidenced within the literature formed the genesis of my research journey as I sought to explore the conceptions of music in and out of school held by a group of contemporary secondary pupils. This understanding could bring us one step further towards reaching the common understanding of musical meaning to which Pitts (2001) refers.

## RATIONALE AND FOCUS OF THE STUDY

It is the give and take of talk that makes collaboration possible. For the agentive mind is not only active in nature, but it seeks out dialogue and discourse with other active minds. And it is through this dialogic, discursive process that we come to know the Other and his points of view, his stories [sic]. We learn an enormous amount not only about the world but about ourselves by discourse with others (Bruner, 1996, p. 93)

My study is qualitative in that it attempts to map and describe the meanings that individuals hold (Cohen and Manion, 1994; Robson, 1993; Patton, 1980). With the exception of a very few recent texts, for example, Stålhammar (2003; 2004) and Hargreaves *et al.* (2002), the extant literature has not yet directly explored the musical conceptions (meanings) of contemporary secondary school pupils from *their* perspective. Nor have they explored how pupils would envision an ideal music classroom.

I was concerned with the *problem* expressed within the literature by exploring the relationship that contemporary secondary pupils in England have towards music. I aimed in this study to expand current understanding of what music means to pupils within and outside of the context of the school. In order to provide all pupils with the opportunity to engage fully within music education, as is stated within the National Curriculum framework in England, I believe that an understanding of their current musical needs could provide an important point of departure. Lastly, the knowledge that does exist is largely framed within the standpoints and frameworks of researchers, and not within the subjective meanings of the pupils. As such, I aimed to provide a platform upon which the pupils could express their meanings.

The overarching questions that have guided the study are as follows:

- What are the various conceptions that contemporary pupils in England ascribe to music in school and out of school?
- What are the differences and similarities between their conceptions of music in and out of school?
- What do pupils want out of their music education?

A further question which is addressed at the end of the thesis is: how can pupils' conceptions of music and of music education inform music educationalists?

## **THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL BASIS OF THE STUDY**

In order to explore the research questions stated above, this study utilises a combination of theoretical and methodological paradigms. Inspired by a constructivist-interpretivist and phenomenographic approach, the aim of the study was to capture the voices of the pupils by mapping, comparing and contrasting the various meanings that they ascribe to music. Phenomenography is a framework that seeks to identify the various conceptions that individuals have of a particular phenomenon (Marton, 1984). Phenomenographers further believe that the quality of learning, what is learnt and how it is learnt, is based on the pupils' conceptions of the subject. An individual's conception of a particular subject can therefore inform us about the decisions and attitudes to learning that pupils hold. Lastly, case-study method enabled me to focus on the perceptions of a group of thirty-four Year 9 pupils from two schools within London, selected from an initial study of eighty-seven pupils from six schools across England.

## CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

While this study is limited to the conceptions of thirty-four pupils in two schools within London, I believe that a contribution along a number of dimensions has been attained. First, the research has attempted to create a contemporary empirical link between the literature on young people and music out of school and the body of literature on young people and music education.

Second the pupils reveal that they are not necessarily turned off by classroom music in itself, as suggested within the literature, but rather feel alienated because of the manner in which the music is presented. The pupils drew attention to the importance of *finding a connection* between each pupil and the musical material presented. I identified three dimensions along which the pupils described this connection; the *personal*, the *social* and the *communal* (to use the pupils' own words), which is one of the findings of the research.

Third, while there was great variance in the nature of the musical experiences of the pupils in this study, I identified six categories of description of what music meant to the pupils. I refer to these conceptions as musical meanings. Music for the pupils in this study was *the expression of emotions and feelings, communication, identity, community, mood, and entertainment*. Each of these areas of meaning-making is inextricably linked to the values and purposes that music serves in their lives.

Fourth, regarding the pupils' descriptions of music at school, I identified two categories of description, neither of which was related to their musical meanings outside of school, a fact that points to the disjunction discussed within the literature. For those pupils who played a formal instrument and were considering taking music for GCSE, music at school was perceived as assisting them to reach their music

educational goals. Those pupils who did not formally study an instrument found music at school to be meaningless and completely detached from their musical goals.

Fifth, the pupils' ideal curriculum for music was one of *connection* thus making it meaningful. It was a curriculum where the pupils' meanings were offered space within the classroom, where they were able to enhance their own musical meanings. The unearthing of pupils' ideal music curriculum forms another contribution which I hope this thesis makes.

## THESIS OVERVIEW

This thesis is structured around issues within the literature in relation to the findings that have emerged from the data. It is divided into three main parts. Part I opens the thesis and provides the background and research agenda. The next chapter, Chapter 2, puts forward a justification of the research agenda by offering a critical review of the literature that addresses pupils' relationships to music in school. Part II focuses on the methodological and theoretical frameworks that have inspired the study. This involves Chapter 3, which presents the methodological framework on which the study has been based, followed by a discussion of the tools used for data collection, along with a presentation of the research design and pilot study. Part III presents the pupils' voices as they speak about what music means to them, and analyses their conceptions in relation to the literature. This Part comprises Chapters 4 through 8. Chapters 4 through 7 present the findings that resulted from the interviews with the thirty-four pupils, along with a discussion of how they relate to the literature on musical meaning and education. The final Chapter 8 concludes with a critique of the methodology used, followed by a proposal of the study's implications for practice and recommendations for further research and study.



## **CHAPTER 2: MUSIC IN SCHOOL – A CRITICAL REVIEW**

This chapter introduces the framework within which music in English schools exists; the National Curriculum. This is followed by a critical account of some of the empirical studies on pupils' relationship to music in schools and out of school.

### **THE INTRODUCTION OF THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM**

The statutory National Curriculum for England and Wales (NC) was established under the 1988 Education Act. Music was included in the National Curriculum as a foundation subject in 1992, which meant it was a compulsory subject until the end of Key Stage 3 (age 14). After this stage, pupils could decide to discontinue or to continue the subject to GCSE level (age 16). Under the National Curriculum for Music, pupils were required to follow a course of study. In 1999, Programmes of Study (POS) were developed to set out the content of subject material. Within the POS, Attainment Targets (AT) offered guidelines to indicate the level of musical knowledge that pupils should attain by the end of each stage.

In remaining faithful to an *inclusive agenda*, the NC emphasises diversity and personal interest, allowing the everyday experiences of pupils to play a crucial role in the construction of an inclusive education. It indicates that:

Teachers need to be aware that pupils bring to school different experiences, interests and strengths which will influence the way in which they learn.  
(QCA, 1999, 2004, p. 16)

The statutory inclusion statement encouraged teachers to 'create effective learning environments in which stereotypical views are challenged,' and to 'secure pupils'

motivation and concentration by planning work which builds on their interests and cultural experiences' (QCA, 2004). The statement also highlighted the importance of a curriculum that reflected the diversity of the population, thereby including a variety of styles and genres. According to the NC, an education in music should develop both an understanding as well as an appreciation of the various types of music which reflect the cultural diversity of England. The pupils should be exposed to different kinds of music, in order to develop and extend their own musical interests. Music education should enhance and increase their ability to make judgements of musical quality (QCA, 2004).

These statements reflect an awareness of the changing demographics of the United Kingdom and of the transformation of the recording industry over the past twenty years, both of which have radically altered the nature and context of musical experiences.

### *The Inclusion of Popular Music and Non-Classical Music into the Classroom*

The NC espoused an inclusive agenda, which highlighted 'equality of opportunity' and demanded the re-evaluation of the repertoire hierarchy. Debate regarding which music would qualify as educationally suitable proliferated shortly before the introduction of music into the national curriculum. On the one hand, some music educators argued against the widely practiced Eurocentric and classical nature of music educational practice. On the other hand, opponents such as Roger Scruton, Nicholas Tate and Anthony O'Hear believed that the classical tradition should be the sole basis for music education in schools. They feared that the Western classical music tradition would be devalued in favour of the more popular forms of music:

Should not the fact that a lot of rock music is violent, nihilistic, drug-oriented and sexually explicit have been in the front of the committee's mind from the

start? Should they not have been aware that not all music is equally good, equally civilizing, equally humane? Shouldn't they have shown some inkling of the power of music, for decadence or for culture, for light or for dark, for Dionysius or Apollo? (O'Hear, TES, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1991)

This debate, namely over which type of music to include within music in schools, however, did not begin with the introduction of the National Curriculum for music. Vulliamy and Lee's seminal work, which emerged during the mid 1970s and early 1980s, marks a watershed in music educational history. Their writings addressed the separation of school music and that experienced outside of the school context. Their arguments were centred on the elite musical culture that was reinforced within schools by valuing classical music over popular and other forms. They argued that by excluding popular forms of music, to which the majority of pupils relate, these pupils were being excluded from the educational process.

These two quotes exemplify their thesis:

We feel that pop should not be taught in the traditional manner, in which the teacher is the master of a body of facts, the whole operation being directed by him. Instead the teacher should start by seeing his pupils as already possessing a considerable knowledge of pop music, which they are strongly motivated to expand. What he brings to the situation, which they do not have, is a body of ideas and concepts about music, the possibility of a real dialogue emerges, particularly if the teacher is willing to recognise the limitations of his own knowledge in this area ... the pupils, in having to communicate with the teacher, could take a more active part in the educational process (Vulliamy and Lee, 1976, p. 2)

and:

One might hope that a more open approach would break down barriers between classical and pop but also within pop the process of musical education should be concerned with expanding pupils' horizons and the best way to achieve this is by encouraging all forms of musical expression. (Vulliamy and Lee, 1976, p. 57).

The general idea behind their thesis has implications for present-day practice. Their thesis advocated a pupil-centred approach, one which espoused a democratic open approach; one which values all forms of musical expression, not validating one over the other, and using the pupils' experiences and meanings as the starting points to learning.

Their arguments were supported by further empirical investigations into classroom practice, where teachers were asked about the degree to which they included popular forms of music (Farmer, 1976; Vulliamy and Lee, 1976). While some schools had over time introduced popular music into the classroom, Vulliamy and Lee's research suggested that the music teachers were nonetheless treating popular music in a manner that only served to reify the dichotomy. A few years later, Green's 1983 survey as reported in Green (2002) revealed similar findings. Teachers in her survey were asked about what music they taught, what they believed to be the most important aspects of music education, and to address what they considered to be the greatest challenge in music education. While seventy-five percent of the teachers in her study indicated that they included popular music in the classroom, her findings suggest a distinct difference in the manner in which the music was approached. Discourse surrounding popular music by the teachers was often negative. Most teachers were inexperienced or unfamiliar with anything other than classical music.

Moreover, most teachers, whether consciously aware of it or not, associated classical music with those pupils who were from the upper classes, and popular music with those from the working classes. Popular musical forms, when introduced into the classroom, were often used as a stepping-stone to classical music, or as a means of entertaining the less motivated pupils. Teachers often assumed that the working-class pupils found classical music alienating, difficult and boring, and as such popular forms were the only suitable form of music for them.

A few teachers in Green's study further indicated that classical music was not suitable for racial minorities, or for those pupils who appeared to have low intelligence. Green's survey suggests that in the classroom, where western classroom ideologies prevail, those pupils who come from a background that supports learning in classical music will be at an educational advantage over others (Green, 2002).

*Changing Attitudes Towards Popular Music in the Classroom?*

At the turn of the twentieth century evidence reveals changing and more open attitudes towards popular music. In 1998, six years after the introduction of the NC and sixteen years after Green's 1983 survey, she set out to ascertain if teacher's attitudes towards popular forms of music had changed. The responses of sixty-one teachers, as in the earlier survey were included in the survey. Findings reveal that popular music had moved up the musical hierarchy, gaining a solid position followed by classical music. Teachers were more open and positive towards popular music than in the earlier study. Despite the inclusion of popular music in schools however, pupils' relationship to music in school remains unchanged, as the following review suggests.

*GCSE Examination*

One of the central features of the National Curriculum is the GCSE examination, which pupils are not required to take. Before the introduction of the NC, music was considered a specialist subject undertaken by those who played classical instruments and wanted to become classically trained musicians (Wright, 2002; Hallam, 1998). The implementation of GCSE music was meant to do away with that exclusivity.

Four years later, Bray's (2000) profile of music participation through the years since the implementation of the National Curriculum for music (coupled with OFSTED [1995, 1998, 2000] figures) indicated that music participation rates at GCSE level had remained relatively stable and low in comparison to participation in other subjects across the curriculum. Music participation during 1994-2000 remained more or less at 6.7 percent, compared with drama participation rates at approximately 14 percent, and art participation rates at approximately 37 percent. Figures for 2000-2004 indicate

a slight improvement by .2 percent (QCA, 2004) Table 1 below gives a comparative overview of participation rates at the GCSE level.

**Table 1: Examination of Arts Subjects at GCSE as a Proportion of the Cohort**

	1995	1996	1997	1998
Music entries	30,346	34,247	35,833	34,301
<b>Percent</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>7.1</b>
Drama entries	63,093	72,955	75,880	72,386
Percent	13.1	14.7	15.4	15.1
Art entries	173,392	189,038	182,616	167,702
Percent	36	38.1	37.1	35

Source: Bray (2000)

Speculating as to why music at the secondary level seemed to be unpopular, Bray (2000) locates the problem in the fact that a teacher's musical knowledge and experience base are generally rooted within a musical tradition far removed from that of the pupils (a notion also suggested by Green, 1988; Hargreaves *et al.*, 2003; Frith, 1988; OFSTED, 2002; Green, 2002; Pitts, 2001; Sloboda, 2001; Gammon, 1996). He argues that the implementation of an inclusive agenda will continue to be a challenge without the prior development of a common ground for understanding. This would entail the recognition, support and value of the musical knowledge, meanings and experiences that pupils bring into the classroom (a notion supported by Stålhammar, 2003; Kushner, 1999; Swanwick, 2002; Hargreaves and Boal, 2001;

Campbell, 1998; Green, 1988; 2001). He further proposed that pupils were not interested in taking music at the GCSE level because they believed that success in exams was very dependent on instrumental proficiency. Moreover, he suggested that gender and socio-cultural factors might play a role in music participation, a hypothesis supported by empirical evidence, such as Bruce and Kemp, (1993), O'Neill (1997) and Green (1988).

## **PUPILS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS TO MUSIC IN SCHOOLS**

### ***A Critical Review of the Literature***

The following section discusses those studies that have examined various aspects of pupils' musical participation in school at the secondary level. The review is necessarily selective and draws on extant literature from 1968 until the present day. Although each study has a different objective, they all point to similar concluding outcomes. I present the studies in chronological order, with a discussion on each study's aims and contribution to the literature on music education. I conclude the chapter with an examination of the studies as a group, and locate the present study within this research context.



## **CONCERNS WITH MUSIC EDUCATION AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL**

The concern with pupil dissociation from music in school is not a new one in music education in the United Kingdom. During the 1960s a survey of pupils' perceptions of schooling was carried out that suggested that music was the least popular school subject at the secondary level (Schools Council 1968). As the survey was intended to examine all school subjects rather than focus on music education, it did not offer great insight into why music was the least favourite subject. It did, however, offer a basis for further enquiry into pupils' relationship to art subjects in schools, and was taken up by Witkin and Ross three years later.

Witkin and Ross (1971) employed the 1968 study to probe the popularity of the arts in schools. Their survey involved over 4,000 pupils in six schools located in Cambridge, London, Bristol, and parts of the South West. The primary tool used was a questionnaire that proved helpful in eliciting general information about pupil attitudes towards arts subjects.

The findings of this survey concurred with those of the 1968 study: music was again the least popular subject. Seventy-eight percent of the pupils indicated that they were unable to associate with the music they were offered in schools, and stated that music in schools was irrelevant to them. In conclusion, Witkin suggested that music's unpopular status was due primarily to the lack of teachers' awareness or understanding of the pupils' world of 'feeling.' He asserted that the music classroom should provide a space where pupils could express themselves and build upon their everyday experiences, a notion that forms the basis of expressivism.

Just over twenty years later, Hannam (1992) set out to replicate the Witkin and Ross (1971) study. Whereas the original study covered six secondary schools in

Cambridge, London, Bristol and the South West, Hannam's study focused on five secondary schools in Derbyshire. Despite the twenty-year gap, Hannam's study reached similar conclusions to those met in Witkin and Ross study. Pupils' views in 1992 were unchanged, reflecting similar concerns and attitudes to those of the subjects of the previous study.

These findings ought to be interpreted with caution. The findings do not represent the entire secondary school population of the United Kingdom, but reflect the responses of 7,000 pupils in 11 schools. Questionnaire-survey was the main tool used. The information available, however, leads me to believe that the questions were posed in a closed manner offering little free room for the pupils to respond in their own words. While helpful in eliciting general information relating to pupils' attitudes towards the arts, much more contextual information would be needed to support the claims made. Readers of the study are left with very little contextual information pertaining to, for example, the conditions under which the survey was conducted – information concerning the pupils, the teachers, and the nature of the schools – which could have had a significant impact on the responses. On the whole, the survey-questionnaire provided a fairly superficial view of pupils' attitude of the arts in schools. More information is also needed regarding how the questionnaire was structured.

### *Ross: A Turn-Off for Some Pupils*

Ross's concerns with this persistent trend culminated in an article published in 1995 and a repetition of the 1971 study in five secondary schools in 1997 with his colleague Kamba. Ross and Kamba's (1997) study, similar to Hannam's, also confirmed the results of the original 1968 study: music was still the most unpopular and under-represented of the arts, and suffered from a relatively low enjoyment factor. Ross's

(1995) article warrants discussion at this point, as it has spawned much debate about the problems of music education.

Ross blames teachers for music's unpopular status:

School music has a sad history. The music teacher is typically a martinet, short on temper and quick on the pre-emptive strike. With an infallible and exquisite ear she banishes the growler to eternal damnation, getting shot of the unwashed masses as quickly as possible in order to bask in the rarefied company of the gifted exceptions. (Ross, 1995, p. 185)...The general impression seems to be that, whilst young people show a lively interest in music outside the school context, it is school music they object to. It is school music that doesn't add up. Among vast numbers of girls and boys music in school is a massive turn-off. (Ross, 1995, p. 185-186)

Ross is clearly an expressivist, highlighting the importance of felt experience:

Music is an expressive experience and learning to express oneself musically means participating in actual occasions of real or playful musical thinking and feeling. (Ross, 1995, p. 195)

Ross's main criticism, similar to that of his 1971 co-author Witkin, is that teachers do not respond to the pupils' everyday world of experiences. He claims that teachers are wrapped up within their own notion of musical experience, a notion based on their own knowledge base and meanings. The unique and personal musical experiences and meanings of the pupils are often not stimulated in the classroom, leaving the pupils feeling alienated and disconnected from the classroom environment. The teacher's role, in Ross's view, should be that of the facilitator, encouraging and helping pupils to build upon their lived experiences and meanings. His criticism

takes a sharp and almost emotional turn when he concludes that music is a subject that cannot be taught – a notion with which Gammon (1996) disagrees, as I will discuss later. Ross appears to have given up hope. While I sympathise with his concerns, I cannot support all of his conclusions. What I feel is lacking in his argument is constructive criticism. In light of all of the problems he describes, he might do well to suggest some sort of solution. What can music teachers do to change the situation? He does suggest that music education should focus on allowing pupils to find their voices and to express themselves, a process which would go some way towards placing pupil experience at the heart of the educational process. However, exactly what that would entail remains unclear in Ross's article.

Gammon (1996) is influenced by Ross's (1995) report. His study performs a similar analysis of music in schools, yet he suggests that caution ought to be taken in making such hard claims as Ross's. In response to Ross's claim that 'music in school is a massive turn-off' (Ross, 1995, p. 186), Gammon indicates that this statement may hold true for the general pupil population. However, despite the implementation of the National Curriculum, music educational practice is still varied, and there are pockets of good practice to be found throughout. At the same time, however, Gammon mostly agrees with Ross and supports his arguments by stating that pupils often perceive music as a specialist subject, exclusive to a select few.

Gammon defends teachers, however, by offering a contextual basis for understanding the demands of the music teacher, which he claims are 'a tall order' (p. 108). He extends Ross's argument by introducing a way of thinking about curricular subjects that reveals the complexities of music education. He identifies five main aspects of subjects in school: the performative, creative, responsive, functional, and factual. Gammon argues that music education (as conceptualised within the curriculum) – along with the teaching of dance, English and drama – has the difficult

task of addressing all five categories. He further suggests that, of these subjects, music at school is least supported by the experiences of pupils outside school. Pupil disassociation and the unpopularity of music therefore stem from this 'cultural dissonance'.

The alignment of the school subject with the pupil's experience of contemporary life and culture has to be a variable in the accessibility and popularity of the subject. (Gammon, 1999, p. 112)

Gammon highlights the importance of pupil experience as a potential way of raising the status of music amongst pupils. The greater the cultural dissonance, the more the pupils will disassociate from the school environment. Unlike Ross, Gammon proposes specific ways to improve music's status. He suggests that music education should involve listening to and watching musical performances – as well as participating in musical activities with which pupils are familiar and to which they can relate – as a basis for learning (a concept that relates to Green's notion of *inherent meaning*, which I discuss later).

### ***Harland: Music is Vulnerable***

Harland *et al.* (2000) and O'Neill *et al.* (2001) are examples of more recent empirical work on the topic. Harland *et al.*'s (2000) three-year study investigated the effectiveness of arts education during Year 11 in secondary schools in England and Wales. The authors used a combination of methodological tools (such as interviews, observations, and statistical information obtained from the National Foundation of Educational Research [NFER] database which included a total of 27,607 pupils in Year 11 from 152 schools taking GCSEs between 1994 and 1996).

They set out to test the hypothesis that engagement in the arts can boost general academic performance. The main finding of this study that pertains to my argument

concerned music's status within the curriculum relative to other arts subjects. The study concluded that 'music is suffering from problems of disassociation'. Moreover, 'music attracted the highest proportion of no impact responses, registered a more limited range of outcomes compared with art and drama, had a relatively low uptake rate at key Stage 4 level, and received lower levels of enjoyment in GCSE courses' (p. 568). Pupil enjoyment, the relevance of music to their lives, skill development, creativity and expressive dimensions were often absent from students' responses. The report concluded that 'overall, music was the most problematic and vulnerable art form' (p. 568). This finding is again somewhat disturbing, although the results ought to be interpreted with caution. The primary aim of the study was to explore the links between the arts and academic results; it did not aim to elicit the views of pupils towards the arts. The claims regarding music mentioned above are therefore more of a by-product of the study's primary aims that would require further investigation in order to be supported. Moreover, a number of overlooked factors may have affected the findings.

I believe that statement concerning music's vulnerable status requires further explanation. What exactly do the authors mean by 'vulnerable'? Furthermore, the authors only sought information pertaining to year 11 pupils in schools with good reputations in the arts, and pupils were selected on the basis of their good performance in music. The fact that the selected pupils were taking music during year 11 indicated that they had chosen music for GSCE. The pupils' goals and perceptions towards music would therefore have been radically different from those of pupils who were taking music during their compulsory music education years. These factors distinguish the population within this study from the general compulsory school-aged population, and (in my opinion) give less weight to the general conclusions reached. As I propose throughout this thesis, acknowledgement

and understanding of the pupils' own conceptions of music may provide an explanation for music's vulnerable status, as reflected in the above findings.

### ***O'Neill: Barriers to Musical Participation***

O'Neill *et al.* (2001), however, sought to address these claims and probed more deeply into the vulnerable status of music. O'Neill and her colleagues (2001) set out to investigate the barriers to participation in school music and to document the extent to which young people engage in a variety of musical activities in and out of school. Over a year, data were collected via questionnaires and interviews with over 2,000 pupils, parents and teachers across Years 6 and 7. The questionnaires addressed involvement in music and other activities in and out of school, focusing in particular on listening habits, dancing and singing, computer usage for composition and instrumental tuition. Individual interviews were carried out with a sub-sample of pupils who represented a range of musical involvement. Students were asked about past and current musical activities, musical role models, support from family, peers and teachers and future musical goals. In order to provide a contextual backdrop for pupil data, reports were collected from the teachers regarding music provision in the classroom and teachers' evaluations of the pupils' musical abilities. Students' parents were also given questionnaires, and some were interviewed about their children's musical background and general use of time, their own musical background and beliefs about their children's musical engagement. Finally, the authors conducted a detailed case study of six pupils of varying musical ability. This study used multiple sources of evidence: by seeking the views of pupils, parents, peers and teachers, the authors sought to offer a complete picture of musical participation. The general findings of the study supported those outlined above in earlier studies: there was a divergence between what pupils wanted and what they were offered at school. As pupils progressed through the secondary school system, they appeared to lose

interest in music at school and to develop their own musical tastes and values outside of the school context. One solution suggested by the authors was to give students more autonomy in their musical decisions at school. This view is not dissimilar to that expressed by Witkin (1974), Ross (1985) and Green (2005b).

This study, while contributing to our understanding of pupils' relationship to music, suffered from a fairly narrow methodological approach and conception of musical participation. The questions posed were focused on eliciting very specific information, with pre-selected and pre-defined activities in a way that privileged western concepts of music. Instrumental performance, listening, dancing and singing are only a few of the types of musical activity in which young people engage today. My experience and research has shown, for example, that there are other types of activity (such as disc-jockeying – DJ'ing – or scratching) that are very popular among young people. The questionnaire did not allow students to indicate participation in such activities. Moreover, the questionnaire allowed little room for students to respond in a comfortably free and open manner. The interview sessions may have provided a more comfortable environment for the students to answer freely, but very little information is offered in the report regarding how the interviews were structured or the nature of the questions posed. Nor does the report reveal the nature of the case studies, other than to say, 'In addition to examining across all of the above measures for each of these children, additional interviews were conducted with friends nominated by the children themselves' (p. 12). It would have been interesting – and, I think, illuminating – to hear what these children had to say.

An understanding of pupil-perceived barriers to musical participation at school can be realised through an understanding of their musical activity outside the school, as the authors explicitly state. However, this understanding can only be achieved with an open qualitative approach – that is, one that allows the pupils to express



themselves in their own words, free (as much as this is possible) from any pre-conceived framework to guide their answers. In attempting to locate barriers to participation, the authors have themselves created barriers to pupil response in their approach to musical understanding; consequently, their study can only offer a piece of the picture.

### *Stålhammar: Control, Authority and Classical Music*

An attempt to provide an open platform for pupils to present their musical views and meanings, was, however, made by Stålhammar (2000, 2003). Stålhammar's comparative examination of young people in the United Kingdom and Sweden focused on problems concerning young people's musical experience and music teaching. He used open-ended interviews as his primary tool, allowing the pupils to speak freely about their musical experiences and meanings. He interviewed twelve fifteen-year olds in the United Kingdom and Sweden and their music teachers. The three questions that formed the basis of his study were: 'how do young people assign value to music, what does music mean to them, and where do their experiences of music occur?'

Using comparative analysis, Stålhammar (2003) was able to explore and analyse the different perspectives on music. He found that pupils' values with regard to music differ from and conflict with those of their teachers. He found that young people value relaxation and community/social life as central to their musical activities, whereas the teachers value technical knowledge. One notable finding regarding classical music was that British teachers believed that it contained certain 'indisputable aesthetic and cultural qualities' (*op. cit.*, p. 65) and should therefore be included in the classroom. The pupils from the United Kingdom featured in his study associated classical music with compulsion, control and school. Valuing classical music over other forms has particular implications for pupil participation.

The pupils indicate that their experiences of music outside school are undervalued at school, which makes their school music experience unfulfilling and alienating. Stålhammar's main argument and conclusion are summed up below:

When young people's own experience is in conflict with the process of knowledge acquisition which e.g., the school can set in motion, it is understandable that there should begin to emerge among the young people their own values, their own attitude and their own praxis, outside established institutions. (*op. cit.*, p. 67)

### *Conflicting Evidence?*

A recent and ongoing study by Lamont, Hargreaves, Marshall, and Tarrant (2002) provides a more positive view of pupils and their perceptions of music in school. The authors undertook a three-month study of young people's music-related experiences in and out of school. They set out not only to ascertain, but also to understand the nature of the alleged disjuncture between musical experiences in and out of school (categories included instrumental lessons, choirs, extra-curricular musical activities, and public performances).

Twenty-one primary and secondary schools participated on a voluntary basis, constituting a total of 1,479 pupils from Years 4, 6, 7 and 9. This study used questionnaires as the primary methodological tool, which posed questions regarding the students' level and form of musical engagement along various dimensions. These dimensions included 'music in school and music in your own time, creating and playing music in your own time, instrumental services at home and outside of school, listening to music and dancing'. Teachers were also interviewed with a view to exploring their aims and objectives for music and the arts, evidence of positive outcomes in music education, development plans for music, factors helping and

preventing the achievement of good practice in school music and developmental benefits of music and the arts. Following the questionnaire, a total of 134 pupils took part in music focus groups.

The findings within this study indicate that 67 percent of the pupils indicated that they enjoyed music at school. They indicated playing instruments, making up music and working with 'real' musicians as contributing factors towards their enjoyment.

As discussed earlier, those pupils who had a background of formal training in their study were those who identified more with school music. An interesting finding concerned the pupils' responses when asked if they would choose to drop music if they could in KS3. Only a few pupils indicated that they would drop music. However, when asked if they would take music for KS4 that is, GCSE the pupils indicated that music at GCSE level was a specialist subject and reserved for those who were highly skilled; which confirms Bray (2000) and QCA (2004). Music was also not perceived as being important in achieving certain music career goals. As such, very few pupils indicated that they would consider music for GCSE.

One of the study's most striking findings – and one that contradicts the findings of most previous studies – was that 'boys tend to enjoy class music lessons more as they move from year 6 to year 9' (2002, p. 3). While this is a welcome result in light of the unpopular and low status of music amongst pupils reported thus far, there are a number of factors that could have contributed to this finding. The first (which the authors themselves acknowledge) is that the small sample size means that the results may not be representative. Secondly, because the schools participated in the study voluntarily, their willingness to take part could imply that the schools felt they had a good reputation in the arts and were therefore eager to show this through their participation. Lastly, there is no indication offered as to why pupils from Year 8 were

not included, which could have altered the findings significantly. Despite the more positive findings, all other aspects of musical engagement examined at school revealed an overall decline in interest. On the other hand, outside of school, pupils indicated an increase in interest and enjoyment of music, a finding that continues to support the disjuncture discussed above between experiences of music in and out of school.

The pupils in this study indicated enjoyment of some aspects of music at school and a desire for more musical opportunities. However, exactly what they wanted and the nature of their musical activities outside of school remains unknown. By asking questions that related directly to out-of-school musical involvement, the authors tried to obtain a more complete picture of the musical experiences of young people. While the picture may not be as grim as those painted by the findings of earlier studies, there is still an obvious need for improvement.

### ***Music Education and the Role of Musical Identities***

Hargreaves *et al.* (2002b) discuss another perspective in gaining insight into the reasons behind pupil dissassociation (I refer to this as a lack of association) with music at the secondary level through the concept of musical identities. This pertinent area of research enables the study of the relationship between music and the individual in its numerous manifestations. The authors suggest that:

Children's development of musical identities, which have their origins in biological predisposition towards musicality, are shaped by the individual groups and social institutions that they encounter in their everyday lives. These form an integral part of those identities rather than merely providing the framework or context within which they develop, and this perspective

enables us to explain identities in music (IIM) as well as music in identities (MII). (p. 7)

The theory comprises two main elements: 'identities in music' (IIM), and 'music in identities' (MII). IIM is defined by 'the social and cultural roles within music' (p. 12). MII, on the other hand, refers to the manner in which an individual develops his or her self-image (or identity through music). In other words, music can be used to express, confirm and construct aspects of personality: youth identity, gender, ethnicity, and national identity. At the same time, however, through the music itself individuals can form their identity, for example as a performer, composer or music teacher.

Lamont (2002), in her discussion of the theory of musical identities in relation to young people in school, suggests that the school is a central agent in reinforcing musical identities. She argues that it is not only the mere content of musical selection that is critical, but also the ways in which the material is presented, that is, the messages transmitted, and the meanings attached (an argument set forth by Green (1988, 2005a) in her discussion of inherent and delineated meanings, which I discuss in chapter 5). Lamont refers to the low GCSE uptake rates and the empirical evidence discussed in this chapter (Ross and Harland), suggesting that in order to improve the situation, there is a need to focus on developing more positive identities within the classroom. These arguments are grounded in her own empirical studies. She explored the influence of the secondary school environment on the development of musical identities. Two schools were chosen for the study, one for its reportedly high reputation in music and the other for its below-average performance and uptake rates in music. Lamont focused on the first three years of secondary school up to Year 9, and included two classes from each year group in each of the schools. She sampled 284 children, who were asked about their instrumental involvement; *do you play a*

*musical instrument?* and *do you have music lessons*, were the two main questions, followed by questions about their families and leisure time activities, and those relating to their identification with music. Questions relating to identity comprised statements to which the pupils were required to provide a scale rating of one to five. For example, Lamont introduced statements such as: *music lessons have very little to do with about how I feel about myself* or *I think this subject is important*. For these statements, Lamont used a self-identification scale to analyse the data.

Lamont's conclusions indicated that 'Children who played musical instruments and took part in musical activities in this study tended to come from homes where other family members were involved in music' (p. 3). She furthermore discovered that 'children who participated in musical activities and described themselves as playing musical instruments showed higher levels of identification with music at school. The responses also suggested that those pupils considered themselves better in music at school than those who did not participate in musical activities' (p. 3). The following statement made by QCA further supports this notion:

It should be noted that the take-up of GCSE Music remains very low (around 7 per cent of pupils). As identified in the section on inclusion, pupils with low self-perception do not see GCSE Music as being an option for them... Able pupils, who do not play an instrument but who have enjoyed music lessons during key stage 3, do not take GCSE Music because they think it is a very difficult subject for them to gain success in – they believe they would find it much easier to get high grades in all other subjects. There is therefore a need for different courses of study to be developed that are seen to be relevant by a larger number of pupils (QCA, 2003 p. 16).

The NC therefore does not assist each child in developing positive identities, which, according to Lamont, is a critical factor in addressing the problem of disassociation outlined earlier. In fulfilling the aims for music stipulated within the NC, teachers should therefore aim to develop more positive identities among their students within the classroom.

While her study offers a new perspective in addressing the relationship between music and the pupils, I feel as if its structure was somewhat limiting. What does Lamont mean exactly by musical activities? Does musical activity only comprise instrumental music or training? The two central questions addressed only aspects of formal instrumental lessons and proficiency. An individual who *plays around* with an instrument and has had no formal training may not necessarily indicate that he 'plays an instrument'. Similarly, a pupil who sings may not indicate that she or he 'plays an instrument' although singing is a valid form of musical activity. Perhaps presenting more open questions may have yielded completely different responses. Furthermore, the questions relating to identity are, in my view, similarly limited in structure. While indicating responses on a scale from one to five may offer a general impression of what the pupils may think, it equally restricts the information to be revealed. The pupils may or may not think that school is important for a variety of reasons, which may be unknown to the researcher. Likewise, the statement '*music lessons have very little to do with how I feel about myself*' is, to my mind, rather complex and requires much more probing and insight to yield a response that is understandable or for a conclusion to be made. Nonetheless, her study has indeed added further insight as to how music in schools may be more inclusive and responsive to the pupils.

### *Example from Cultural Studies*

Addressing a similar concern (although focusing on media and cultural studies), Richards (1998) addresses the neglected engagement of the cultural interests of young people in his study of the teaching of popular music. He argues that teachers within media education have often ignored the centrality of popular music in the lives of young people today. Richards's study employed participant observation and interviews while teaching a media-studies class in an inner London school. The aim of his research was to examine how pupils relate their informal knowledge of popular music to their formal learning of popular music within the classroom context. In his study, Richards makes an attempt to gain an understanding of the pupils' own world of music based on their own accounts. He achieves this through the use of biographical reflection, interviews, observations and classroom interaction and examples of student's work.

He addresses the absence of popular music and culture in the classroom and offers insight into how teachers may best incorporate a culture of dialogue with their pupils. He discusses the challenges faced by teachers in creating the conditions in which the cultural logic of pupils' experience can emerge; conditions that favour dialogue rather than interrogation. Teaching, according to Richards, should espouse a provisional suspension of the knowledge and meanings held by teachers in an effort to become open towards those of the pupils. He draws on the example of Shirley Brice Heath's study (1983), where children and teachers had widely varied conceptions about what it means to tell a story. In her study, she concluded that with regard to music in schools as an example, the purposes of teaching music may need to be redefined through an effort to engage with the positions voiced by the pupils. Moreover, sustained attention to the meaning of students' cultures and to their negotiations of the classroom context are central to the development of an effective,



reciprocal, practice of teaching. The classroom then ideally becomes a space where questions about cultural value, identity, cultural, personal and social can be debated and analysed. It would involve interplay between pupils' and teachers' knowledge in which none is privileged over the other.

A similar conclusion was reached by Green (2001) and Campbell (1988). In an effort to enrich our understanding of children's musical lives, Campbell (1988) emphasises the need to understand the musical worlds of children from their own perspective. Furthermore, she calls attention to the everyday knowledge that the pupils bring into the classroom as providing a critical element within the educational process. Cohen *et al.* (1994) additionally warned of the dangers of theorising in coming to understand young people, their meanings, conceptions and lives in general.

## SUMMARY

This chapter has constituted a critical account of some of the major empirical studies on pupils' relationship to music in school at the secondary level. We know from the literature that pupils are not satisfied with music at school, that some pupils experience barriers to learning based on a lack of instrumental facility and that the musical classroom is often out of touch with the realities and meanings of the pupils, as the following quote indicates:

...Pupils must be involved in all musical developments, in particular investigations into the decline in enjoyment in music from key Stage 2 to key Stage 3 and why pupils, who really enjoy music and commit much of their own time to music making, do not wish to continue study of music in Key stage 4 through the music GCSE (QCA, 2004, p. 4).

As I have argued previously, while much investigation into the relationship between young people and music within and out of school has been conducted, there is still a need to understand young people from their own perspective. There is a need to bridge and contextualise the theories and hypotheses that exist with the voices of pupils of today. In the following, I present Part II of the thesis: the methodological framework within which I propose a means of eliciting the pupils' perspectives as they describe what music means to them.

# **PART II: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS, RESEARCH DESIGN, DATA COLLECTION AND PILOT

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter opens with a discussion of the notion of the pupil voice, followed by a discussion of the phenomenographic and the constructivist interpretivist approaches. The stages within which the study was conducted will follow, accompanied by a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the data collection tools used. The chapter concludes with a presentation of the pilot study that was carried out to test the effectiveness of the chosen tools and approach.

The studies reviewed in chapter 2 utilised a range of methodologies from large-scale surveys to questionnaires. While these studies have contributed greatly to our understanding of pupils and their relationship to music in and out of school, none of the evidence has addressed the conceptions that contemporary secondary pupils hold towards music in and out of school from their perspective. In an attempt to offer the pupils a voice, and to map out the various meanings that young people hold towards music in and out of school, I have been inspired by a combination of methodological frameworks.

First, my study is partially inspired by the notion of the *pupil voice* and phenomenography. Together they provide a framework within which I could explore the variation in meaning as expressed by the pupils. Second, the constructivist-interpretivist approach offered a platform upon which I was able to capture the multiple meanings and realities expressed by the pupils.

## THE 'PUPIL VOICE'

The premise upon which this present study was developed is that the pupil's voice can provide a means to gaining insight into the worlds of pupils (in this case, their musical worlds). By doing so, it provides a much-needed dimension to the examination of educational phenomena (Johnston and Nicolls, 1995; Lincoln, 1995; Pollard and Filer, 1996; Dahl, 1995; Ruddock, 2003).

Sometimes I wish I could sit down with one of my teachers and just tell them what I exactly think about their class. It might be good, it might be bad, it's just that you don't have the opportunity to do it (Schultz and Cook-Sather 2001, p. xii).

According to Schultz and Cook-Sather (2001), consulting pupils should be a priority in any educational endeavour. They argue that pupils feel the need to be taken more seriously at school. Furthermore, pupils desire to become incorporated into the educational process and to take a more active role in the educative process – not merely sidelined (a statement supported by the pupils in my study). Pupils want to break through the existing barriers of interaction that they often perceive to exist between the teachers and the pupils. In short, they want to speak out and have their voices heard.

Much research on the pupil perspective has been undertaken in a number of curricular areas. Macbeth and Sugimine's (2003) study of subject preference and choice, for example (which included data from nearly 700 pupils across six different nations), indicated that subjects that allowed for creativity were among the most preferred and chosen subjects. Overall, the preferred subjects were those which were intrinsically interesting to the pupils: subjects that permitted some degree of

autonomy and allowed the pupils to experience what Csikszentmihalyi (1997) has referred to as 'flow' which I discuss later. How can music educators foster an environment in which pupils can experience celebration or flow? The first step according to phenomenographic researchers is to consult the learners about their various conceptions held on the subject.

## **PHENOMENOGRAPHY**

The basic idea of phenomenography is that each phenomenon can be expressed or conceptualised in a limited number of qualitatively different ways, and it is the task of phenomenography to map these possible understandings (Marton, 1981, p. 196).

A philosophical framework that seeks to describe the qualitatively different ways in which an individual experiences, conceptualises and ascribes meaning to a phenomenon, phenomenography provides a platform for presenting the pupils' voices as they reveal their musical meanings (conceptions).

The term phenomenography is rooted etymologically within the Greek term 'phainomenon', in combination with the term 'graphein', which, when combined, mean 'a description of appearances'. Phenomenography is not only a philosophical stance, but also a research approach. Phenomenographic enquiry makes human experience and meaning its research object.

The research tradition of phenomenography evolved in Sweden during the 1970s. Initial investigations set out to explore the relationship between learner and subject matter in various learning contexts. The studies performed revealed that variation in the outcome of learning was related to variations in the approach to learning. This insight was used as a point from which to begin to understand the choices pupils

make and the behaviours that guide their actions. Central to phenomenography is the view that variation in experience and meaning-making constitute the most important part of the learning process.

According to Marton (1981), phenomenography does not concentrate on psychological aspects. A conception is not a mental structure, he argues, but rather a way of experiencing and making sense of something. Therefore, a conception is composed of the relationship between the person and the phenomenon. Consequently, phenomenographic research focuses on the interaction between the two, with a focus on the 'what and how' as opposed to the 'why'.

Marton and Booth (1997) provide a framework within which phenomenographic enquiry can be understood and distinguished from other traditions. They have identified some key elements of the approach. Firstly, phenomenographic research is entirely qualitative in nature and espouses a relational second order perspective; that is, the research aims to describe the experiences of the researched as opposed to that of the researcher. Secondly, phenomenographic research considers reality to be an integral part of the individual rather than a separate entity. Thirdly, another difference between phenomenography and other qualitative methods of enquiry is phenomenography's focus on variation in human meaning. Finally, phenomenographic research concentrates on the internal relations between the variations in conceptions. These variations are defined as categories of descriptions. These categories and the relationships between them subsequently form the results of a phenomenographic study, which is referred to as the outcome space (Marton, 1981; Johansson, Marton and Svensson, 1985).

Phenomenographic studies have primarily focused on the pupils' perspectives within the context of higher learning (Marton, Hounsell and Entwistle, 1997). Some

have focused on the variation in which subject areas are understood by pupils in higher education, examining such subjects as biology (Hazel, Prosser and Trigwell, 1996) and economics (Dahlgren, 1997). Bourke (2001) explored primary pupils' conceptions of learning in and out of school. With respect to music, Reid (1997) has used a phenomenographic approach to explore variations in the way in which instrumental and vocal students experience learning music. Phenomenographic research in the area of music education is sparse and could provide another perspective and expand the existing knowledge base (Bresler, 2001).

#### *Strengths and Weaknesses of the Phenomenographic Approach*

Due to the frequently small populations interviewed within the phenomenographic tradition, a common concern raised within the literature relates to the extent to which the findings can be generalisable. Phenomenographic researchers do not aim to generate findings which can be generalised across populations (Marton, 1987). Instead, they aim to generate awareness in order to provoke further inquiry and discussion (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). Moreover, phenomenographers do not claim that their interpretations are the only valid interpretations possible, but instead recognise that each interpretation is unique. They argue that knowledge can never represent ultimate truth because it is constantly changing.

A further concern related to the issue raised above is addressed by Sandberg (1997) who draws attention to the limitations of replicability of a phenomenographic study. It is however not the aim of this tradition to produce results that are replicable. The primary aim is rather to discover and gain insight. This process however should be as rigorous as possible with procedures and quotes documented so that other researchers could recognise the process and follow the ways in which the researcher came about these outcome spaces. After reading through the categories of



description, another researcher should be in the position to recognise and apply these categories to an individual case.

The aim of phenomenography is to understand how the individual understands his or her experience. It is concerned with describing the world as it appears to others (Marton and Booth, 1997). It is interested not in that actual experience itself, but the conceptions around the experience as expressed and related by the individual in question. As such, the outcome will never be a complete picture of the experience, but rather a partial one, as related by the interviewee. Despite the partiality, Marton (1997) upholds that even a partial description is adequate in order to determine the qualitative differences in difference perspective of an experience.

### *Phenomenography in Practice*

Bourke's (2001) and Reid's (1997) studies have inspired the philosophical underpinnings and methodological structure of the present study. The premise upon which Bourke (2001) based her study was that the manner in which a child perceives the purpose of schooling will have a direct effect on how that child perceives learning in general and his or her role within the school. Bourke sought to discover the meaning that students ascribed to their learning in order to understand how they conceptualised learning both within and outside of the school context. She highlights that although attempts have been made to incorporate pupil perspectives in educational research, much of what has been done has still failed to let go of researcher perspective and beliefs, thus preventing studies from gaining a deeper knowledge of the pupil perspective. One ought to hand the research agenda to the pupils.

She first used phenomenography to identify the pupils' conceptions of learning and then used an ethnographic approach to observe how these conceptions played out in

everyday classroom interactions. Her study included a sample of 26 students (11 girls and 15 boys) from three different classes in a Year-7 school in New Zealand. Her question 'Does learning happen in places other than school?' was used as the main prompt for discussion of the out-of-the school context as the pupils revealed their various conceptions of learning. Her study confirmed the phenomenographic stance that the pupils' conceptions of learning played a large role in determining how they approached learning in school. Their conceptions affected their role in the learning process as well as the manner in which they interacted with others within the learning context. She concluded by suggesting that meaningful learning experiences could be provided for pupils once the pupils' multiple conceptions are integrated into the classroom context.

A similar approach was undertaken by Reid in her 1997 study of the various ways in which instrumental and vocal students within higher education experience their learning. Reid's study was intended to discover the range of ways in which university students experience their learning of music as well as how they experience the role of performing in their learning. This knowledge, she argued, would help teachers to foster learning environments that would better support their students. Reid's study examined a group of 14 students chosen from different musical backgrounds and instrumental focuses. The main prompt questions that formed the basis of her study were: What does learning mean to you? Could you tell me what you aim to achieve through learning your instrument? The next question was: How do you know if you have learned something? And the last question was: How would you describe the relationship between the way that you learn and the way that your teacher teaches? These questions were presented in open-ended interviews.

The results revealed that what music means to the students forms the basis of their understanding of instrumental music. The students in her study were located within five basic categories, ranging from students who focused their learning purely on technical proficiency and examinations (and who consequently relied heavily on their teachers) to those students who perceived music as communicating personal meanings (and not needing much external advice or direction). Reid remarked (just as Bourke did) that teachers should construct activities that permit the students to experience a wide array of musical meanings. Those learning activities which best support a pupil's personal meanings and understandings will provide him or her with the most meaningful experiences. Pupils will benefit most and learn more effectively when their conceptions are afforded space within the classroom.

These studies have indeed indicated the usefulness of using such an approach in order to gain insight into the views of learners.

### *Constructivist-Interpretivist Approach*

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) define constructivism from an educational perspective, suggesting that learners produce and construct their own personal knowledge. The mandate as constructivist researchers is to clarify how meaning is constructed in experience and further to capture the voices and meaning of those studied. Proponents under the various terms, however, all share the goal of understanding the meanings and the world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it.

Interpretivist knowledge therefore represents an emic perspective. That is, one from the view of the participants' insider perspectives of the understandings, which denies the possibility of universal laws and empirical generalisations. The foundation of interpretivist knowledge is the reconstruction of intersubjective meanings, that is, the

way an individual interprets his or her meanings (Guba, 1990). Reality therefore exists as a set of holistic and meaning-bounded constructions.

Methodologically, constructivism demands that the inquiry takes place within a natural setting. It dictates that methods should be designed to capture the multiple realities of the participants in a holistic manner to ascertain meaning implicit in human activity (Guba, 1990). This tradition is hermeneutic and depends entirely on the researcher as the main data collection instrument.

The question of generalisability is often raised as a weakness within constructivist-interpretivist research. Due to the small population studied, constructivist-interpretivist researchers do not aim to generate findings that can be generalised across populations. Instead, they aim to make us aware of what exists and to provoke further inquiry and discussion, not to make any conclusions, generalisations or actions (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). Moreover, constructivist-interpretivists do not claim that their interpretations are the only valid ones, yet recognise that each interpretation is unique. They argue that knowledge is the 'consequence of human activity and a human construction'. Knowledge cannot therefore represent ultimate truth because it is constantly changing (Guba, 1990, p. 26).

Even though constructivism ultimately seeks to make explicit the views and meanings of others, it recognises that the researcher's values and interests form an integral part of the research process. It is never possible to completely detach the observer from the observed, although various safeguards can be taken to minimise the researcher's influence. The role of the researcher as the main data collection instrument therefore plays an integral part within the research process and necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions, experiences, and

biases at the outset of the endeavour, as discussed at the start of this chapter (Gadamer, 1990).

This study is based on the belief that there are no final understandings or determinate meanings. Understanding is thus a continuous process. Text, art, self and historical events are constant objects of hermeneutic enquiry because understanding is never exhausted. As Denzin (1990) highlights, social instructions are based on various meanings and understandings. These meanings, however, often have little relevance to those held by the clients whom they are meant to serve. Such a situation can result in a conflict of interest.

Extending this argument with direct reference to my study, which forms the thesis to my study, I would argue that school music is unpopular (or, indeed, that music education in schools has failed in its mission) in part because of a failure on the part of educators to understand the meanings of the clients (i.e., the pupils). We may come close to achieving our educational goals if we come closer to understanding what music means to young people by confronting them and listening to what they have to say. As in all naturalistic enquiry, the researcher's assumptions and biases will inform and shape the methodology. The relationship between the researcher and those being researched should therefore be made explicit.

### ***The Relationship Between the Researcher and the Researched***

I aim to be cognisant of the perspectives that I introduce to the study, which will both reflect and colour my observations and interpretations.

Interpretation is a process in which our preconceptions and prejudices evolve in reciprocal interaction with the data and text we consider [...].

Without prejudices, we cannot even begin to approach the data;

without data we cannot begin to alter our preconceptions (Gadamer, 1990, p. 236).

My biases and prejudices are a culmination of my experiences as a musician, a child, an adult, an educator, a performer and a youth worker. My position within society as a young female member of a multi-ethnic minority who possesses a western upbringing must be made explicit. My approach to understanding and interpreting the multiple manifestations of musical meaning will be a reflection of these various positions. Gadamer (1990) refers to this relationship as an 'effective historical consciousness' or the connections of ourselves with our data that creates meaning. This process of awareness has also been referred to as *reflexivity*. One can make significant progress towards establishing the 'truth' of a study's findings by locating oneself within the research process and identifying one's own perspective.

In the following section, I present the research design, followed by a discussion of data analysis procedures, an examination of ethical considerations with regard to the study, and the notion of validity.

### **CASE STUDY STRATEGY – CONSIDERATIONS AND CHOICES**

The case study strategy, with its focus on creating a *deep, holistic picture*, provided a suitable strategy with which to approach my research objectives (Yin, 2003). Case study research is a strategy that comprises an all-encompassing method. It is one that espouses the research design and data collection techniques, in addition to an approach to data analysis (Cohen *et. al.*, 1994). According to Stake (1995), case studies are typically used to explore a phenomenon in depth and to understand the dynamics within a particular setting.

Case studies are bound by time, location and activity, and involve single or multiple cases (Yin, 2003; Stake, 1995). Within each case there can be multiple levels of analysis. As such, within my study, I investigated two cases (the schools), within which the units of analysis were the individual pupils. The case studies were bound within a time frame of a year within the geographic location of London, England.

### *Choices of Case Study Schools*

I chose to explore the musical meanings of thirty-four Year-9 pupils in two secondary schools located in London. I chose two *typical* schools in terms of the Schemes of work as suggested within the NC. Both schools included popular and other types of music. Classical music was not the primary focus. Furthermore, both schools rated as average across the national level, in relation to GCSE music uptake rates. Yin (1994) provides a classification of cases into *unusual* or *typical*. The two cases chosen for this study therefore represent a typical case. That is, a school in which the GCSE music uptake rates were average, according to the figures revealed in Chapter two. My initial investigation however, included what Yin (1994) refers to as an *unusual case*. The initial study included eighty-seven pupils from six schools in London and Birmingham. This selection of pupils was chosen from four representative schools, or *usual cases*, and two *unusual cases*, representing one 'underperforming school' with one 'high performing school', with high GCSE music uptake rates. I spent one term within each of the six schools.

The presentation of data from the two '*usual cases*' however was based on two principles. In aiming to reach my research objective, I needed to focus on the conceptions of those pupils who represent a 'usual case'. Secondly, my choice of seventeen pupils from each class of the two schools that I selected was partially inspired by Campbell (1998), Green (2001) and those studies that have utilised a

phenomenographic approach. According to phenomenographic research, Trigwell (2000) asserts that 15 interviewees represent an ideal number from which to identify variation in meaning. Less than 10, he maintains, is far too limited a number and more than 35 interviewees often produce too much data, which complicates analysis. Most of those doctoral studies that utilised a phenomenographic approach interviewed between 15 and 35 subjects.

My reasons for selecting pupils in Year 9 were twofold. Firstly, these pupils are experiencing their last year of compulsory music education. This last year has critical implications for GCSE decisions. As we saw earlier, the literature identifies the low uptake rate for music at Key Stage 4 as a matter of serious concern (Bray, 2000; Wright, 2002). Second, I believed, from personal experience, that the pupils at Key Stage 3 would be best able to articulate their meanings and perceptions more fully than younger pupils. These students are at a stage where they can think critically and make decisions about how their educational paths may lead to realising their goals.

### *Description of Case Study Schools*

School 1 is located in central London. It is an inclusive comprehensive mixed school with just over 900 pupils. The music department is headed and run by one individual who teaches all of the music classes in years 7 through 11.

The music classes are conducted within what is referred to as the "Arts Block". This block is a small building next to the main building, within which all of the arts, drama and music classes are conducted. There are eight rooms in total of varying sizes, which include regular classrooms, a large arts studio, a drama studio, and a music studio. The music studio is filled with a number of instruments and recording equipment and used on occasion by various after school music clubs.



Music in Key Stage 3 music is offered once a week for a double lesson. The music classes are structured around the National Curriculum and follow the Schemes of Work as set out by the NC, including both theoretical and practical activities. The schemes of work for the 2004 academic year included Music and African drumming, minimalism, and popular song since 1960 (see appendices for more detail). All of the lessons began with the teacher going over in brief what was done during the last week and informing the pupils what will be done during the current session. The teacher traditionally stood or sat in front of the room taking an instructional approach. During practical activities, the teacher would occasionally walk around to observe and comment on the work of the pupils. As far as instrumental provision is concerned, private lessons were offered to those pupils who are willing and able to pay and who show an interest. Private lessons are offered by the music teacher in piano. Peripatetic teachers are brought in to teach violin, viola, piano, guitar, clarinet, oboe, sax, trumpet, trombone, flugelhorn, flute, voice, and drums.

After-school musical activities include two music clubs, the school choir, the Mad Hatters, a madrigal group, a sax ensemble, one string group, and GCSE coursework sessions. With the exception of the Mad Hatters, members are required to take an audition. During my time of research within the school, the school choir and the madrigal group was the only ensemble running on a weekly basis.

Additionally, school 1 offers one field trip and excursion each year to supplement the topics which are covered within the classroom. In 2003 a trip was planned to attend a performance of Indian music. In 2004 a trip was planned to the Royal Albert Hall. In 2005 there are plans to see the film *Rhythm is It*, which is a film documentary exploring the Rite of Spring within which a group of secondary pupil from schools within Berlin are taking part.

School 2 is also located in central London. It is an inclusive comprehensive mixed school with just over 1,000 pupils. The ethnic composition of the school equally reflects the diversity of the city.

Music is offered throughout all years from year 7 through 11. The Head of Music at the time of my research joined the department in 1999. The music department is also run by one other full-time member of staff who has been at the school since 2000 and one part-time member who has been at the school since 2001.

Similar to school 1, the music classes are structured around the National Curriculum and follow the Schemes of Work as set out by the NC. In Key Stage 3, all pupils receive a double lesson of music weekly. Each lesson typically begins with the teacher playing a cassette tape with different genres of music. This is used to accompany the pupils as they enter into the room and to create the basis for the classroom activity to follow. The schemes of work which were covered during my time of research included the blues, programme music, and music and media (see appendices for more detail). The music lessons typically comprised an even combination of both practical and theoretical activities. The practical activities were introduced to enable the pupils to perform and compose music individually and in small groups. The teacher made an effort to engage pupils in class activities by introducing an award system. Classroom rewards were available in the form of commendation slips which were awarded for significant achievement and effort. Additionally, opportunities were also made available for assembly or concert performances, which were very welcomed by the pupils.

Private instrumental lessons were also offered to those pupils who were willing and able to pay and who showed an interest. Private lessons were offered by the head music teacher in piano and guitar. A peripatetic teacher came in on a daily basis to

offer private lessons in violin, clarinet, oboe, sax, trumpet, trombone, and flute. After-school musical activities also included two school choirs, a small chamber music group, and GCSE coursework sessions.

During my time of research, there were no field trips or excursions although it is planned each year to have at least one trip to see a live performance. During the previous year, one trip was made to attend a rehearsal of the London Symphony Orchestra.

## Stages of Research

### *Stage 1: Pilot Study*

I conducted a pilot study in two of the six schools to which I referred earlier. I refer to this pilot stage as Stage 1, and which will be presented at the end of this chapter. During this first stage of the study, I met with both the head teacher and the music teacher in each of the two schools to arrange and confirm the course of my research within their institutions. I also undertook a period of observation in order to familiarise myself with the research setting.

### *Observation*

The purpose of observational data is to describe the setting that was observed; the activities that took place in that setting; the people who participated in those activities; and the meanings of the setting, the activities, and their participation to those people (Patton, 1980, p. 124).

Observation helps to support and supplement information gathered from other sources of inquiry and provides a template upon which other sources of data can be presented. Furthermore, it permits a description of the subjects of the research and of the surroundings in which the research took place. Campbell (1998), for example, highlights the importance of observation in educational research with children, indicating that it strengthens other evidence by providing it with a contextual picture. In her study Campbell spent hours observing the children in various settings such as at school, on the playground, in buses and in toy stores in order to provide the reader with a backdrop for her data on what music means to children. Similarly, I observed pupils as they sat in their music classes and watched them as they socialised on school premises and interacted with their peers. The purpose of

observation was to provide a descriptive context as a backdrop for the interview data. Patton (1980) argues that the researcher has to make a decision regarding the extent to which he or she will play a role. Participation can range from complete non-participation (non-participant observation) to complete immersion within the field (participant observation).

For my study, I observed the pupils as they participated in their classes, ensembles, and lunch breaks. I observed them as they played in the schoolyard, hung out in between classes and interacted with others around them. I chose non-participant observation in order to minimise the manipulation that my presence might have created (Cohen *et al.*, 2003; Robson, 1993). The purpose of my observation was to get an idea and *feeling* for the context within which I would be conducting the research.

### ***Stage 2: Selection of Pupils***

After Stage 1 of observation and familiarisation, I embarked on Stage 2 of the research, which entailed the selection of pupils for the study in each school. I asked for volunteers and surprisingly the entire class volunteered in both cases to take part in the project. I therefore selected seventeen members from each class to include a range of pupils with different musical backgrounds, class averages and an even gender balance.

### ***Stage 3: Individual Interviews***

After the selection of the pupils, I conducted the interviews during the course of an academic year, which comprised two school terms. The primary aim of the interview is to establish the phenomenon as it is experienced, by exploring its different aspects as fully as possible. The interview serves as a dialogue between the researcher and interviewee that facilitates a platform of reflection. Each interview was conducted within a location of the pupils' choice, within the school premises. I asked for

permission to record the interviews and used an inconspicuous mini recorder. Using a tiny high-powered microphone enabled me to focus in on the pupils' voices.

Each pupil was interviewed at least two to three times and each interview lasted between 40 minutes and 65 minutes. The most difficult problem I encountered was the steering of the interviews in some cases. On the one hand, there were a number of pupils who, while eager to participate, were unable to articulate their responses in more than a few words at a time. I constantly had to probe and ask them to explain what they meant, and they were still sometimes unable to explicate. For some, a topic such as music was simply just there, and taken for granted. It was certainly not something that they had ever had to think about. On the other hand, there were a number of pupils who offered quite detailed responses and continued talking, moving the conversations in directions that bore little resemblance to my initial query. It was important for me to make them feel as if they could be as open as possible to me. As such, I did little to prevent them from speaking.

### *Interviews*

Interviewing is used to discover things that are not easily observable. While one can observe actions and behaviours, we are unable to observe feelings, ideas and the meanings that individuals ascribe to the world around them (Patton, 1980). Interviews are therefore useful to explore and discover perspectives as is expressed by the interviewee in the context of the interview. As I aimed to explore what music means to pupils from their perspective, the interview as an instrument provided a helpful basis for eliciting their responses. May (2001) indicates three types of interviews that are used in social science research, namely structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Each type is characterised according to the degree of flexibility it allows to the respondent.

### *Structured Interviews*

Structured interviews are often associated with surveys. This particular method relies less on the role of the researcher and depends on the questionnaires as the main data collection tool. The researcher remains neutral in this case, and, as such, researcher bias is limited. Structured interviews are useful for easy comparability across responses, as each subject is generally presented with similar questions, presented in a similar manner (May, 2001). Since pupils' own voices are central to the overall study, the use of structured interviews would not have been appropriate.

### *Semi-Structured Interviews*

Three of the studies in the literature review in Chapter 2 used semi-structured interviews as the main tool for data collection (Harland *et al.*, 2000; O'Neill *et al.*, 2001; Hargreaves *et al.*, 2002). Semi-structured interviews involve a combination of both structured and unstructured questions. Although there is more room for the respondent to respond than in the structured interview, I opted to use unstructured interviews as the main data collection tool, for the same reasons mentioned above.

### *Unstructured Interviews*

The strength of the unstructured interview lies in the fact that it allows the respondents to relate their answers in their own words, on their own terms. It allows the respondent to diverge into other subject areas that may have been overlooked, and yet could be pertinent. According to May (2001), an unstructured interview:

Provides qualitative depth by allowing the interviewees to talk about the subject within their own frames of reference [...]. This allows the meanings

that individuals attribute to events and relationships to be understood on their own terms (p. 124).

He furthermore adds that: *flexibility* and the *discovery* of meaning lie at the centre of unstructured interviews (*ibid.*). As such, I used unstructured interviews within my pilot study, in order to enable the pupils to speak freely about their musical meanings on their own terms and from their perspectives.

Moreover, there are various degrees to which the researcher can structure the open-ended interview. Patton (1980) has identified the *informal conversational*, *standardised open*, and *interview guide*. The *informal conversational interview* is the most spontaneous in character, and allows the interview to flow as a natural conversation. The approach is phenomenological in that the 'researcher has no presumptions' about what responses may be offered. Its strength lies in its ability to allow the researcher to be as flexible as possible, and places the interviewee's voice entirely at the centre. There are no predetermined questions as they flow from the immediate context. I opted for this type of interview in my study.

The data emerging from this type of interview represent the various voices of each respondent. As each interview generates different data, several interviews are typically needed in order to create systematic material. As such I carried out two to three interviews with each pupil. Equally, more time in the field is therefore required in comparison to the other open-ended interviews. More time is additionally needed for data analysis, as different questions will generate different responses. The researcher has the task of repeatedly sorting through the data and looking for patterns and themes that may have emerged.



In contrast, the second type, i.e. the *standardised open-ended interview* allows for the least degree of flexibility for the researcher. This type of interview involves the construction of carefully formulated questions. Each interviewee is posed the same questions, which, to my mind, limits any unanticipated issues that may be important. It also ensures a systemic approach, as each interviewee is posed questions across similar topics. Although interaction is kept focused, it permits individual voices to be heard.

The issue of *motivation* is also important in interviews. In order to keep the respondent motivated throughout the interview, Kvale (1996) suggests the use of probing, for example, to indicate that the researcher is interested in what the respondent is saying. During my study, I either offered positive reinforcement through my facial expressions, or tended to gently nod my head to indicate that I was interested and wanted to continue listening. On some occasions, I released a short 'really' or 'yes' to confirm that I was involved in what the pupil was saying. According to Patton (1980), these techniques are referred to as *elaboration probes*, which, he suggests, are optimal ways of indicating positive support to motivate the respondent. On other occasions, I utilised what Patton (1980) refers to as *clarification probes*, in which the listener needs clarification of earlier responses. He suggests that it is important to ensure that the need for clarification is the fault of the listener and not the respondent. In a few cases, I asked my respondents to offer more detail, by firstly offering a positive statement such as '*that is very interesting*', and then asking them to go into more detail. Lastly, Cohen and Manion (1994) highlight the importance of location in interviewing. The interviewee ought to feel comfortable within the interviewing context. I was granted permission to use an empty classroom, the lunch area or the pupil hang-out room. As such, I asked the pupils to

decide in which of the three options they felt most comfortable. All interviews were tape-recorded using a mini Mp3 disc.

#### ***Stage 4: Focus Group***

Once the individual interviews were completed, I held one focus group discussion within each school. This was suggested by the pupils within the pilot study. The purposes of these focus groups were twofold. Firstly, it offered a collective platform for the pupils to reflect upon their meanings. Secondly, it was useful in providing an additional form of verification and clarification, enabling me to confirm any prior misconceptions that may have emerged.

Within each school, I invited each of the individual participants to take part in a final round of the project. The focus group discussion lasted in each case for 55 minutes and took place in an empty classroom. The focus group discussion was recorded using a minidisk.

The questions for the focus group were based on the responses from the individual interviews. I offered the pupils my category of descriptions sheet and this formed the basis of discussion.

#### ***Stage 5: Data Analysis***

Data analysis was based on transcripts from a total of 78 individual interviews and 2 focus group interviews. While listening to the recordings of the interviews during the pilot study, I had difficulties at times in ascertaining exactly what was said on the tape, and this required a number of re-listenings; a most time-consuming effort.

After the interviews were transcribed verbatim, the process of analysis began. This process was iterative and entailed a continual process of reading through the

transcripts, rereading, comparing and contrasting statements, from which patterns began to emerge.

The individual interviewee was not the unit of analysis; instead, the ways of meaning or conceptions became the units of analysis. With initial categories in mind, I re-examined the interview transcripts to determine if the categories were sufficiently descriptive and indicative of the data. An additional review examined the data for the internal consistency of the categories of description, in addition to enabling new and unanticipated categories to emerge from the data. This process of data review and modification continued until the modified categories seemed consistent with the interview data. Marton (1986) says that 'definitions for categories are tested against the data, adjusted, retested, and adjusted again. There is, however, a decreasing rate of change, and eventually the whole system of meanings is stabilized' (p. 43). After the quotes were grouped, I focused on the relationship between the groups. I then defined attributes to be established for each group, and these constituted the categories of description, or 'outcome space'.

The present study consisted of a number of stages of data analysis, which are in accordance with those steps as stipulated by Marton *et al.* (1997).

#### *Data Analysis Phase 1*

Phase 1 entailed several readings of each transcript, initially to create an individual profile and conceptions (meanings) as expressed by each pupil.

#### *Data Analysis Phase 2*

During Phase 2, I made copies of the transcripts and made notes alongside the right margin for any questions or misunderstandings of terms. I additionally highlighted the use of repeated words or phrases.

#### *Data Analysis Phase 3*

After reading through all of the individual profile interview transcripts and taking notes, I listened to the recorded interviews again to ensure accurate transcription. Additional notes regarding pauses made in the interview, noises or gestures were then written into the copied transcript.

#### *Data Analysis Phase 4*

During this phase, I created an individual profile summary. This was created on a number of A4 paper landscape formatted sheets of paper taped at the ends to create as long a sheet as was needed. Based on the individual transcripts, I cut out similar quotes and phrases to comprise a category of description. Using the pupils' own words, I created tentative categories of description.

#### *Data Analysis Phase 5*

During Phase 5, I created an additional sheet entitled 'the categories of description' in which I abandoned analysis at the individual pupil level and reviewed each category of description as the unit of analysis. After several readings, I was able to create a number of categories of description based on words or phrases that were repeatedly used by the pupils.

Quotes were compared and contrasted and similar quotes or phrases were placed together under one category. This process is what Marton (1988) refers to as the evolution of creating categories of description. By placing the excerpts together, the overall meaning of each category is made clear.

#### *Data Analysis Phase 6*

Phase 6 was iterative and I read and reread through the quotes in the context of the individual transcripts and again out of context in order to assist in my own interpretation of the response. This procedure limited the possibility of creating assumed categories or of misinterpretation, as suggested by Trigwell (2000):

The parts and the whole define each other dialectically. Categories of description are constructed by grouping part of the transcripts together according to their similarities and differences (p. 70).

He adds that at various stages within the data analysis, however, the focus will alter to the parts rather than the whole. Furthermore:

But in order to see whether these parts are, in fact, parts of the same category, the focus also has to be on the transcripts. Similarly the categories of description of the conceptions are all internally related. Each is also a part of a whole set of conceptions (p. 70).

#### *Data Analysis Phase 7*

Once I was convinced that I had exhausted the process, I compared and contrasted each category to ascertain if there were any relationships between them and the overall range of variation.

#### *Data Analysis Phase 8*

I then developed an outcome space, which summarised the categories of description. The end result of phenomenographic research is generally presented as the 'outcome space' – that is, the stories told by the interviewees. The outcome space ideally represents the various ways of experiencing the particular phenomenon in question, at that particular point in time for the particular group in question.

Once a stable outcome space has been defined, the researcher attempts to develop 'as deep an understanding as possible of what has been said, or rather, what has been meant' (Marton, 1994, p. 428). To do this, one must consider not only specific categories of description, but also how the individual categories relate to one another and how one person's conceptions compare across different topics through a process of familiarisation, selection, delimitation, and description. Familiarisation entails reviewing the data several times in order to become familiar with the themes that arise from the data. Selection entails the selection of statements that are significant. Next, delimitation of parts represents conceptions of the phenomenon by comparing statements in order to find cases of variation or agreement. The statements are thereafter grouped accordingly. Lastly, description entails describing the similarities within each group by identifying similar words used within the quotes.

#### *Data Analysis Phase 9*

During the final phase of analysis, I re-visited the individual transcripts in the light of the newly developed outcome space to ensure consistency within and between related meanings as stipulated by Trigwell (2000).

### ***Presentation***

In some cases the pupils, despite the open-nature of the question, offered short adjectival responses, and I had to probe further into exactly what they meant. Students often repeated words or phrases in order to emphasise important points. From these phrases, various themes began to emerge. After a number of readings and reviewing the tapes from the interviews, I followed what Marton and Booth (1997) propose:

The researcher immerses himself or herself in the material, trying to see the total meaning in what the research subjects said and did, resolving apparent contradictions, knitting together as whole a picture of the meaning of the phenomenon as possible, not only for individual subjects but also for the group. Eventually a spectrum is seen (p. 138).

According to Marton and Booth (1997), the categories of description represent a hierarchical continuum. That is, each category should be inextricably linked to the next. Each category should contain elements of the other, but include additional elements.

Each category belongs to a nested structure, which, combined, comprises *meaning*. Each category has been presented according to Marton and Booth (1997) in their requirements of a fully described outcome space. They stipulate that each category should refer to a specific conception or aspect of the experience under question. Each category they uphold should be presented in a logical, hierarchical manner.

## **SAFEGUARDING RESEARCH CREDIBILITY: RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY**

### ***Validity***

In order to enhance the 'worthiness' of qualitative research, a number of authors have drawn attention to the importance of validity and reliability. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), validity in qualitative research can be compared to 'exactness' in positivist research. It ensures a certain degree of confidence in the data (Cohen *et al.*, 1994).

The practice of 'reflexivity' (or reflection by respondents on their responses) in qualitative research is an additional measure to enhance studies' validity. In this study, I asked the pupils to reflect upon their responses in order to ensure that they were 'accurate' and to their satisfaction. This process helped to ensure that my findings revealed a valid representation of the pupils' meanings. Cohen *et al.* (1994) further suggest that a pilot (testing out the methods and tool used before the main study commences) serves as a means to ensure the validity and reliability of research. In accordance with this theory, I pre-piloted my study's questions and prompts. According to Robson (1993), a study's contribution to knowledge is also an important validity measure. This issue is discussed in the final chapter.

### ***Reliability***

Reliability in qualitative research is perceived in its interpretive awareness and value in producing useful insights. Sandberg (1997) argues that the reliability of an interpretive study lies in its internal consistency. Hasselgren and Beach (1996) take up this point and caution towards the possibility that the findings or outcome space of the study may in fact be a result of the researcher's own ideas, conceptions and meanings. In response to this issue, Marton (1987) highlights the importance of



including quotes into the study. The quotations act to support the emerging categories and in doing so suggest an internal consistency.

Furthermore, Sandberg (1997), in response to Hasselgren and Beach's concern, suggests five procedures that may assist in achieving reliability and integrity. First, these procedures include ensuring that the research questions are as open as possible, allowing the researcher to follow his or her own train of thought. Second, they avoid premature categorisation of results until all of the interviews are carried out. Third, they avoid making theoretical explanations for the responses made by the interviewees. The fourth measure entails the process of rechecking data during analysis. Indeed, complete non-subjectivity is unavoidable, but one can make efforts by being aware of it. The last factor therefore refers to researcher awareness. This is the continual effort of being aware of our subjectivity.

Lastly, critiques often argue that words or conceptions can have more than one meaning. As such, a number of researchers have proposed safeguards against misinterpretation. Booth (1997) proposes the process of questioning until exhaustion to check and recheck that interviewee and interviewer have understood each other. Within my research, I undertook a process of questioning and requestioning until I believed to have reached this level of exhaustion.

## **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

I used the 1992 British Educational Research Association ethical guidelines in carrying out this research. 'Ethics' refers to the codes and principles of behaviour that guide social enquiry (Stake, 1995). It informs the nature of and justifications for enquiry, thereby allowing the researcher to reflect upon his or her actions, as well as those of the subjects (May, 2001). In research, ethical decisions are fundamentally

concerned with what is morally the best way to treat the subjects of a study (*ibid.*). The researcher has a moral obligation towards the participants in his or her study, and must respect their needs, desires, rights, and values throughout the entire research process and thereafter. In keeping with BERA principles, I adopted principles of informed and voluntary consent throughout the research. I furthermore employed a number of safeguards throughout this study in order to minimise the risk of harm to participants (Abbott and Sapsford 1997; Merriam, 1998). Firstly, I emphasised at the beginning of my interviews what my research aims and objectives were. I attempted to do this in person during my first visit to the class. I was offered the first few minutes of class time to introduce myself and my project to the class. I asked for their permission and answered all of the questions they asked me regarding my research. I endeavoured to ensure that all of the participants agreed on all aspects of the study. Moreover, after each interview session, I offered them the opportunity to reflect on and verify everything that had been discussed.

Ethical concerns also address the consideration of the participants. In keeping with this, I ensured that all of the subjects who participated in the study were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity.

## **PILOT STUDY**

The rationale behind the pilot was to test the appropriateness and effectiveness of the methodology and interviewing strategy proposed. The pilot was divided into three stages of familiarisation, selection and interviews. Following the description of the pilot study, I describe the methodology that I used to guide the study.

### ***Stage 1: Observation and Familiarisation***

During the first stage of my pilot, I met with the music teacher in both schools to discuss the course of my study. I also used this visit to familiarise myself with the setting and the pupils in general. I spent one morning in each school walking around the premises, and in the afternoons I observed both Year-9 music classes.

The two focus classes were very lively and in both instances it took more than a couple of minutes for the music teacher to get them settled. After a brief introduction and explanation of my study to the class, the pupils from each class began to ask me a number of questions. They were curious as to who I was and what I was doing there. They wanted to hear the introduction from me (see appendix A). I introduced myself and the project and answered questions accordingly. In school 1, after 10 minutes, the class was asked to resume to their normal music classroom activities. In class 2, I spoke for over 15 minutes, after which I then took a seat at the back of the classroom and observed the remaining class session.

### ***Stage 2: Selection of Pupils***

My second visit to the class occurred during the following week. After a short re-introduction, I again described my project in brief to the class and asked for volunteers to take part. I left a sheet of paper – a sort of a blank list - on a desk in front of the door and asked those who wanted to volunteer to write down their names on their way out.

In both cases, the entire class had written down their names, which was a sign of motivation and encouragement for me. However, I had to make it clear that I would only be able to select three pupils from each school. I therefore had to go through a selection process. This entailed asking the teacher for recommendations and reading through background and family information on each pupil from the head teacher's

office, which was granted to me. I asked the teachers to advise who they thought were those pupils who performed well in class, and those who did not perform well in class. I wanted to select pupils who represented different backgrounds. As such, I selected firstly two pupils who formally played an instrument out of school. Secondly, I selected two pupils who were reported as not being formally involved with music in or out of school. Lastly, I selected one pupil on the basis of his low performance in music in school and one pupil based on his high performance of music in school (based on teacher records). I selected a total of three girls and three boys.

After the selection of the pupils, I sent them each a letter of confirmation and asked them to indicate to me when and where they wished to hold the interviews. All interviews were held within the school premises. The pupils in school 1 chose an empty room located next to the lunch room. This room was spacious, with instruments and stereo decks. It was often used as a hang-out room for the pupils, and a place where they clearly felt comfortable. The pupils in school 2 chose an empty room within the music department. It was similarly a large spacious room with a piano, books and posters.

### ***Stage 3: Interviews***

The pilot study comprised twelve open interviews with six pupils. Each pupil had two interviews. I conducted the two interviews with each of the participants during the course of two months. The interviews were recorded using a mini MP3 recorder. Each interview was transcribed when I returned home that evening. During the second interview, in order to cross-check my data, I asked the pupils for clarification on certain issues by showing them what I had transcribed.

Each interview lasted for one class period, which gave us about forty minutes of interview time. The interviews, however, were often interrupted by external noises of pupils running around or coming into the room to see what we were doing. One pupil then suggested to create a 'do not disturb sign', which they placed in front of the door during the following week. This issue was then resolved.

The questions posed in the pilot study were:

- What does music mean to you?
- What does music in school mean to you?
- What are your most meaningful musical experiences?
- How would construct your own curriculum for music?

These initial questions suggested that there was some degree of reformulation to be made. The second question: *What does music in school mean to you?* evoked a number of non-verbal responses. Posing a 'what question' came across as being somewhat dry and direct. A number of the pupils responded by shrugging their shoulders, followed by a long pause. Other pupils raised their eyebrows and offered me a look of guilt, for not being able to verbally respond to my question. The verbal responses that I did receive were as follows:

Alexandra: Music in school does not mean anything to me.

Erik: Music in school does not mean anything to me really. It's just not like music at all. I mean...

Candice: I do not think that music in school is really important. I mean, look at how many hours we have a week. It's just sort of there. So, it does not really mean anything to me.

Despite the open nature of the question, I soon realised that my question was laden with assumptions. The proposed question was based on the assumption that music in schools was meaningful to the pupils, or that that music in schools had *some* sort of meaning for them. I therefore reformulated the question. I probed a couple of times and finally evoked responses from the following question: *Can you tell me what music in school is about for you?* which I have used for the main study.

The last question also needed reformulating. My aim was to offer the pupils a feeling of authority for this question. I wanted them to reflect critically on their musical experiences in school and relate their vision, so to speak, of the ideal curriculum for music. After the first interview, and a couple of prompts, I decided to use the terms *vision* and *ideal* in the question for the main study. The question was therefore reformulated accordingly:

- Can you describe to me how you would construct the ideal curriculum for music?

As I posed this question, I was greeted with a bright 'oh, OK ... that's cool!' from one of the pupils, and I noticed how motivated she was in responding to the question. The other pupils mentioned that they enjoyed responding to this question most. The question seemed to have offered the pupils an agreed sense of ownership and duty. They took much more time for this question than any of the other questions that I had offered.

## RESEARCH BIAS AND LIMITATIONS

Case study research is not without its limitations and has often been criticised for lacking scientific rigour. In particular, it is often pointed out that it does not provide a strategy that is easily replicable, and can therefore not claim to generate generalisable outcomes (Stake, 1995).

Case studies, however, do not claim to be generalisable across populations but *can* be generalisable to theoretical propositions. They are also useful in expanding theories and offering insight into the various possibilities that may exist. What is unique to case study research is its ability to create an in-depth holistic picture of a single case.

The subjective views of any researcher cannot be ignored or eradicated in any way. There will always be some degree of influence, however minimal that may be. I attempted to minimise any biases by, first, simply being aware that my presence was a factor that could have altered the responses offered. Second, I consulted with colleagues and the pupils to verify my findings throughout the research process. Third, I attempted to present the data and categorised them according to the words and phrases that they used.

## SHORTCOMINGS IN APPROACH

The naturalistic approach with open-ended interviews was congruent with the rationale and basis of a phenomenographic and constructivist approach. The initial interview, I feel, was important in order to establish rapport. For the subsequent phases, however, I realised that not all of the pupils approached the interviews in a similar manner. That is, my experience showed that some pupils felt so comfortable that they spoke at length and revealed things to me that had nothing at all to do with the actual research agenda. Some of the pupils indicated that they saw me as a 'big

sister' or an older teenager in teacher-training. While I was clearly flattered this proved a difficulty at times. While it was very important for me to make the pupils feel comfortable, I had to interject and focus the interviews accordingly. With one pupil, I had the opposite situation, in that he was not able to express himself verbally in more than a sentence or two. Throughout some of the interviews, there were disturbances at times in terms of noises from other pupils outside of the room, or other pupils who came in occasionally to see what we were doing. This was indeed a cause of distraction, and, in one case, completely threw my interviewee out of his train of thought. To avoid such circumstances, one may consider using another strategy; perhaps the use of personal journals, where the presence of the researcher would not influence the setting.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the pilot study confirmed for me that both sites were suitable as case study sites. It further confirmed the appropriateness of the use of open-ended interviews. Lastly, these techniques appeared to have been welcomed by the pupils, as they were eager and motivated to share their thoughts and conceptions with me. As a result of the pilot, I was able to make adjustments accordingly for the main study. I have used the data from the pilot study in the discussion of the findings in Part III.

The research strategy was chosen to provide an open approach for gaining insight into the conceptions of young individuals. The data provided a wealth of valuable information, much of which, due to the limitations of this thesis, cannot be reported. The main themes that have emerged from the pupil's descriptions, however, will be presented in the third part of this thesis.



# **PART III: FINDINGS**

## CHAPTER 4: WHAT MUSIC MEANS TO PUPILS

### INTRODUCTION

Part III presents the findings of the research in relation to the literature. I have included a number of representative quotes within each category so as to enable a third party to follow up my own process of analysis and categorisation. For the most part, I have used the pupils' own words, adjectives and descriptions as header titles. The pupils all seemed to use similar words or phrases to express what they meant. The categories of meaning have therefore been identified through the exact words used by the pupils. In adhering to the principles of anonymity, I have used pseudonyms in lieu of the original pupil names. The categories of description or the conceptions that emerged from the data are not individual conceptions that are held by one particular individual. The categories represent the pupils' conceptions at a collective level (Marton and Booth, 1997).

Moreover, I shall present the data as printed from my transcriptions so as to enable the reader to gain insight into exactly what was said by the pupils. This is done to serve two purposes. Firstly, I have included full quotes in an attempt to honour *the pupil voice*, which was discussed previously. Secondly, providing quotes serves as a means of validity and reliability. In terms of presentation, I have indicated long pauses of more than a few seconds in the interview with a [...]. A short pause of a few seconds is indicated by three successive full stops. I have not presented the findings according to the school in which the pupils attended. The findings across both schools revealed similar results.

## CONCEPTIONS OF MUSIC OUT OF SCHOOL

As I have argued, in order to meet the demands of an inclusive curriculum, the meanings that pupils ascribe to music ought to find space within the classroom. Developing an awareness and understanding of what music means to young people is the first step towards the creation of the inclusive agenda outlined within the National Curriculum, where *all* pupils can experience more celebration and less alienation within the classroom.

It is this task that I have chosen to undertake in my study. In this following, I present and examine the data that emerged from the interviews with the 34 pupils (28 plus the six pupils who took part in the pilot study), focusing the discussion on 'what music means to pupils'.

The extant literature provides a plethora of evidence to confirm the prominence of music in the lives of young people (for example, Howe and Sloboda (1991), Giroux (1996), Czikszenmihalyi and Larson (1984), to name a few). This was exemplified by the pupils in their descriptions. They spoke about the important role that music played in their daily lives, told me about the various musical activities in which they engaged, the number of CD's they owned or, as Omar and Abby explain:

Omar: Music is just so important to everybody around the world. We could not survive without it because it does a lot for people I am always listening to music (Interview 2).

Abby: Music is my life. I think that I listen to music more than I do anything else (Interview 2).

During the 1980s in the United Kingdom for example, popular and rock music played a dominant role in the lives of more than ninety percent of young individuals (Frith, 1983). Furthermore, more than 97 percent of British young people owned audio recorders (DeNora, 2000) and listened to music for, on average, three hours daily. Most of their expendable income was spent on purchasing musical products and recordings. In the USA, the figures are similar. During the mid 1960s, the annual sales of popular music alone exceeded the one billion dollar mark, increased fourfold a decade later, and by the mid 1980s the figure was up to twelve billion. Moreover, kids aged 14 through 18 in the USA during the 1990s were listening to more than 10,500 hours of popular music (Garton and Pratt, 1987). This figure they highlight equates to the amount of time that children spend in the classroom from kindergarten through the end of compulsory schooling. Even before the years of music television, the average American 10 year old listened to music on average four hours daily. This number increases as youths get older (Garton and Pratt, 1987). Figures today indicate that 98 percent of young individuals are actively engaged in various forms of musical activity and spend on average two to three hours listening to popular music a day (Hargreaves and North, 1999).

Debates surrounding musical meaning are multifarious. Past debates have adopted one of two diametrically opposed stances: the referentialist stance or the essentialist stance. Generally, the absolutists propose that musical meaning lies exclusively within the context of the work itself (see Hanslick (1891) for an example of an absolutist *par excellence*). Musical meaning is therefore entirely autonomous; and is constituted by the relationships among the tones within the musical work (see, e.g., Meyer (1956) and Cook (1998) for a more recent review). The music does not signify any content or referent outside or beyond the actual music itself. In contrast, the referentialists propose that music's meaning is entirely due to its ability to refer to

concepts external to the realm of music. Furthermore, the 'referential' view holds that musical meaning is to be found in the feelings, emotions, images, and concepts that music evokes as opposed to the music itself. Current debate over musical meaning, however, has come to view the former opposite poles of the debate spectrum as in fact complementary factors that combine to make up musical meaning as a whole (see Martin, 1995).

Most pupils in this study indicated that what music means for them depends on a combination of factors. Musical meaning for the majority of the pupils was not confined to the actual music, its notes and structure, but rather emerged as a response from interaction with the music. A few pupils mentioned that music means whatever the musical participant wants it to mean, placing the participant at the centre of the meaning-making process:

Erik: Music does not just have meaning in my view. Music is whatever I want it to mean. I think that is what makes it so unique to everyone. It depends on the person and how they see it (Interview 1).

Emily: Music is special because it means something to everybody but it can mean different things. I think that it depends on just how the person is really and in a way what the person sees and feels and how it fits into our lives (Interview 1).

A number of contemporary authors propose that musical meaning is inextricably linked to the use and function it serves for individuals (Feld, 1990; DeNora, 2000; Middleton, 1990; Martin, 1995; and Denzin, 1992). For Small (1998), musical meaning is thus to be found not just in those musical objects but it is to be found in the act of

*musicking* itself – in the *doing* of music, an issue to which I turn in Chapter 7. Similarly, the pupils and children in Stålhammar's (2003) and Campbell's (1998) studies confirm that what music means to an individual is directly related to the uses and functions it serves in their lives.

Merriam (1964) offers a framework for understanding the various uses and functions that music serves for individuals. He proposes ten ways in which individuals use music (emotional expression, aesthetic enjoyment, entertainment, communication, symbolic representation, physical response, enforcing conformity to social norms, validation of social institutions, contribution to the community and the stability of culture and preservation of social integration). These can be further categorised into the cognitive, emotional and social domains, as discussed by Lull (1987).

Musical meaning for the children in Campbell's (1998) study was similarly related to their uses and function of music. In her study, six of the functions and uses of music in their lives of children related to those of Merriam (1964). Emotional expression was a central area for the uses and function of music in the lives of children. This refers to music's ability to express emotions and feelings, or, as Merriam (1964) defines it, the experience of something beautiful. Aesthetic enjoyment is another factor, which relates to the 'deep emotional and intellectual enjoyment' (*op. cit.*, p. 176) an individual receives when engaged with a piece of art. Entertainment, another factor identified by Merriam, is simply the act of having fun and enjoying oneself.

Music as communication is the expression of ideas and experiences. Symbolism, which is in Merriam's list and not present in Campbell's study, represents a larger idea or emotion. Merriam (1964) has identified *physical response* as being another function, that is, the use of the body. In Campbell's study, the use of movement and music was inseparable in the musical lives of children. The children were always

moving to some degree while singing or playing, humming or clapping. *Enforcement of social norms* is a factor that Merriam has defined as acceptable behaviour or beliefs. In Campbell's study, music was used to provide either warnings or some sort of instruction to the children. *Continuity and stability of culture* maintains widely held values and beliefs within a group or society. This refers to the use of music at particular cultural events, such as weddings or birthdays. The last factor Merriam has identified is the *integration of society*, which refers to that which brings people together. Music can be social in bringing people together into one shared experience.

With specific reference to secondary pupils, recent empirical studies in developmental psychology have attempted to define the dimensions along which music is experienced by young people today (Tarrant, North and Hargreaves (2000); Zilmann and Gan, 1997; Sun and Lull, 1986). Sun and Lull used what is referred to as the uses and gratification approach which was developed to measure how media affects individuals. Similar to Merriam's categories, this approach has identified ten basic categories within which the uses and functions of music can be understood and analysed. These ten categories very much fall in line with those outlined by Campbell and Merriam. These categories involve *enjoyment, being creative, relieving boredom, helping to get through difficult times, being popular with others, relieving tension, creating self-image, expressing feelings, pleasing friends, and reducing loneliness*. The only category not addressed in Merriam's list was the *creation of self image-identity*. According to the pupils in my study, musical meaning gains its unique-ness through the relationship between the individual, the music and the context within which the music is presented. I categorised the pupils' responses on what music means, into six categories of description, some of which address Merriam's categories and each of which was related to the value and use it serves in their lives.

## MUSIC AS EXPRESSION OF EMOTION AND FEELINGS

Music touches everyone emotionally. Music is the expression of feelings and emotions (Tim).

The most prominent response offered by the pupils was that music is the expression and emotion and feelings. Music is first and foremost a form of expression for all of the pupils in the study. Music is expression, and music means the expression of everything that is felt and experienced in life. This conception therefore provided the gateway through which all other conceptions of meaning could be accessed. Without expression or emotion in music, they said, there was nothing to feel, nor communicate, and nothing with which to identify, as is exemplified by Mischa's comment:

Mischa: It is like a thing that sort of activates us to feel and to live. If we were not able to feel or to express ourselves then we would not be able to do anything because music is expression (Interview 1).

Within this conception, I characterised their responses into personal and social dimensions. The personal here refers to what the pupils describe as *personal feelings*, which are released or expressed through music either as either active listeners or as performers within the musical experience. The social dimension refers to those emotions and feelings that are shared beyond the individual.

In the following, Karly and Anne-Sophie similarly describe the importance of emotion and feeling on the personal level:

Karly: Music for me means [...] personal feeling [...] no it means to express personal things [...] yeah, expression of things that we feel, but maybe can't



really put into words, you know. Expression is what makes it music yeah? (Interview 1).

Paula: Can you tell me some more about what you mean by that?

Karly: When I listen to music, I don't just like put on whatever. I know exactly what I want because it makes me feel in a certain way because music expresses maybe something that I want to feel at that moment. It's really personal in a way. It's sort of like expressing something from really deep down that only I can feel (Interview 1 continued from previous).

Anne-Sophie: Music means personal emotion. Yes, it's like, all about emotion and stuff that we feel inside of ourselves really really deep down (Interview 1).

Other pupils alluded to very specific feelings that comprise music's personal meaning, as Thomas and Mike express in the following:

Thomas: Music means happiness and sadness. Music means and expresses happiness and sadness to me ... it means not just that but it means everything that we can feel personally. ... To me it means expression of feelings that can't be expressed any other way (Interview 2).

Mike: Music means exactly what we feel, like sadness, loneliness, and joy. It is personal for me but it can also be non-personal (Interview 2).

The majority of the pupils referred to listening as their primary musical activity. In the following segment, for example, Zian describes what music means to him both as a listener and as a performer:

Zian: It's a good question, because funny [...] I never really thought about it. But we all have music in our lives [...] everybody really. Hhmmm [...] music means, music is the expression of feelings. Like, even like depending on what piece I am playing, when I am playing I am always trying to express something. It is different from listening. When I play piano, music means to express something personal that I feel just to express what I'm feeling then. I think that for people who play an instrument, we can feel music somewhat more deeply than others, because we are in it. Does that make sense? It means expression too when I am listening but perhaps not as intense I think (Interview 1).

Paula: Why is listening different?

Zian: Well, it is not really different but I am not making the expression, but just listening to whatever is being expressed. I listen to something because it's expressive yeah and because it is expressive it makes me feel something. So someone else is expressing their personal feelings to me (Interview 1 continued from previous).

Sally and Beatrice similarly both play an instrument outside of school and describe what music means to them both as a listener and as a performer:

Sally: It's [music] the expression of our deep feelings and emotions really. It just releases everything out that we feel. I mean when I am listening to music or I am playing it does the same thing and means the same thing to me. Maybe if you are playing it, it is a bit more intense maybe? (Interview 1).

Beatrice: Music means [...] [short pause and she looks up at the ceiling and thinks about what to say] quite a lot to me because it makes me feel [...] it makes me express things that I feel really personally [...]like that only I can feel (Interview 3).

Paula: What kind of feelings?

Beatrice: Well, feelings that are like really personal and hidden. Like, I can't just say what it is [...] well sometimes, but sometimes not. I mean, that's why I need music [...] to express these things, and or well [...] to feel things that other people express like when they express their personal feelings. OK [...] I mean like when I listen to something that expresses something that I feel or have like felt before then it makes me feel really, really good. The same thing actually when I am playing myself. I mean [...] that is what music is all about for me [...]. It means expression of someone's feelings or my own (Interview 3 continued from previous).

The views of the interviewees seem to suggest, at least on this level, that there were slight differences in meaning to be found between the conceptions of performers and those of listeners.

### *Emotion and Feeling: Is there a Difference?*

As the pupils offered their responses to me, I wanted to clarify what they meant by the use of the two terms *emotion* and *feeling*. I wanted to understand if the terms were used interchangeably or whether or not there was a distinction to be made. I probed further and asked the pupils what they thought the difference was between the two terms. For these pupils, there was no distinction to be made:

Sola: Music is emotion and feeling and they both mean the same thing. It is stuff that is inside of us that can be shown to the world (Interview 2).

Liza: They mean the same to me (Interview 3).

Andy: They sort of belong together, but there is no real sort of difference (Interview 2).

Sally: Emotion and feeling come from the same thing [...] the same sort of part in us (Interview 1).

Henry: Emotion is feeling and feeling is emotion (Interview 1).

For other pupils, feeling was something secondary and a consequent of emotion:

Mary: [pause] well, you feel something from an emotion I suppose (Interview 2).

Gerald: Music is something that can change your emotion when you listen to it. It can make you happy, sad, depressed, angry, sad and thoughtful. Music means emotion to me and then makes you feel in a certain way (Interview 1).

Kyoko: An emotion makes you feel in a certain way. So music expresses emotion and is emotion but then because of that emotion you feel something (Interview 1).

Janett: Music means emotions because it makes me happy, it makes me sad, it makes me tense, and it's [...] it is just unavoidable. It just makes you feel things even if you do not want to, but sometimes if you want to as well (Interview 2).

Mina: I think that you feel a certain way because of an emotion you have (Interview 1).

One pupil indicated knowing that there was a difference but was not able to articulate it by indicating: '*I can't really say it in words*'. In sum, it appeared that emotion was a primary state of being, whereas feeling was secondary according to the majority of the pupils.

Reimer (2003), and Langer (1953) argues for the centrality of emotion and feeling in musical experience, but makes a distinction between the two. For Reimer, 'feelings are dynamic mixtures of subjectivities that exist below and often far beyond the level of emotions'. Therefore, for Reimer emotions are a sort of sub-category of feeling. Langer's (1953) thesis argued that music is a 'wordlessly presented conception of what life feels like' (Langer, 1953, pp. 59-60). For her, a musical structure contains similar structures of our feelings. Music is therefore not an exact representation of our feelings, but rather an echo of the essence of that which is felt. She furthermore argues that a composer may compose a piece by imagining a particular emotive state, without necessarily having ever experienced it. She goes on to describe music as a non-representational expressive form, which has an ability to represent forms of feelings, thus making it 'a tonal analogue of emotive life' (Langer, 1953, p. 27). Although she does not define the term emotion, she implies that a feeling encompasses a larger domain than emotion and 'encompasses the full 'range of human awareness.' This notion was reflected in Liza's response:

Liza: Music is feeling, it is what we feel, how we feel and copies what we feel but offers a way that we cannot express in words (Interview 1).

### *Music as Language*

The notion of music as a language was addressed by a few of the pupils. Gerald suggested that music is like a language because emotion and feeling was inherent within the music itself indicating that:

Gerald: Music is about feeling, just like a language is about communication. But music is that too and actually music is its own language. I think that some music is just happy, because of the types of notes they use, even if you do not understand the words. It is just there. They are just made to be happy (Interview 2).

This notion remarkably reflects an absolutist position, such as that held by Cooke (1959). Cooke believed that meaning is found within the inherent structures of the music itself. Emotions arise from within inherent structure of the music. A central component in his thesis is the belief that the musical system, or *language* as he defines it, carries inherent emotional qualities. To substantiate this premise, he describes the reaction of a major third as meaning *pleasure*, or evoking pleasure from those who experience it, as he expresses in the following:

That the major third should be found to express pleasure should surprise no one, since it is present [...] early on in the harmonic series: it is nature's own basic harmony, and by using it we feel ourselves to be at one with nature (Cooke, 1959, p. 51).

Musical language, according to Cooke, contains the properties of the natural world, and thus music conveys through its inherent structure the 'ideological message of humanism' (Martin, 1995, p. 37). While this response may apply to some people, it may not hold for others. His universal claims ignore a number of social factors. His

theory is based on the assumption that individuals are all pre-conditioned in the same manner, and, as such, will all respond in pre-determined ways. While he does, to a certain extent, acknowledge the possibility of social conditioning into habits and tastes, he deregulates this option over the inherent power that he believes resides within the music itself.

Cooke's reference to music as a language is, to my mind, somewhat short-sighted, and again fails to recognise the importance of context. I agree with Martin's (1995) critique of Cooke in stating that a word does not carry inherent meaning within itself, but takes on meaning depending on the context in which it is spoken or used, the manner in which it is said, by whom and so on.

However, another argument that he fails to acknowledge, in my opinion, is that a musical response is socially conditioned. An individual who is unfamiliar with the particular tradition or style may not infer pleasure from the major third relationship as Cooke (1959) implies, and, depending on the social context, the habits of the listener may denote something completely different. His analysis is indeed limited to a narrow concept of the western classical tonal music tradition, and as such his universal claims are therefore not valid. By doing so, Cooke implicitly claims the superiority of the western classical tonal music tradition over other types. In sum, while Cooke refers to the emotional aspects of musical response, I feel that his theory is somewhat short-sighted and linear in perspective. Cooke's dualistic relationship between the music itself and emotional response ignores the social dimension of experience.

### *The Expression of Emotion and Feeling on the Social Level*

The pupils additionally focused on music as the expression of emotion and feeling at the social level. The social level refers to a shared space, as the pupils describe it:

Mary: Yeah, music is a way to express the feelings that we have inside of us. It expresses personal stuff but also things that we all feel so that we can all relate, so that other people can understand. It's like sharing our expressions (Interview 1).

Gerald: Music is the sharing of our emotions and feelings to other people in other groups and societies (Interview 1).

Mina: Music means a lot to me. For me music is about telling other people about life, but really about sharing feelings in life. Like, if we don't feel anything then life is meaningless and is just like nothing really (Interview 1).

### *Text and Music*

A few of the pupils in their descriptions of what music means to them contemplated the importance of the lyrics to music. Just how important were the words in influencing their musical meanings? Karen pondered for quite some time about what music means and suggested:

Karen: It's all emotion and feeling I think because of maybe the words. Well, I quite wonder what music would be like without words. But then, sometimes it is really not so important, because it's just all about the general feeling of the music I think (Interview 2).



Mina: That is funny because I hardly know the words to most of the songs I listen to. Maybe a couple important words sometimes, but I generally just like the tunes and hmmm-along (Interview 1).

Beatrice: I love songs that are just like romantic because they just sound romantic. The words are important sometimes of the person wants to make a certain message. But the music is important to make it feel romantic (Interview 1).

For Frith (1987), the lyrics of the text in popular music are that which gives it its use, and access to meaning. As he indicates "Pop love songs don't 'reflect' emotions...but give the romantic terms in which to articulate and so experience their emotions' (*op. cit.*, p. 102). Middleton (1990), Denzin (1969) and Martin (1995) contend that the meaning of popular music is found not in the words, nor only within the context, but rather within the uses to which it is put.

## MUSIC AS MOOD, RELAXATION, RELEASE AND REFUGE

One of the first things music does is to help actors to shift mood... (DeNora, 2000).

Halina: Music is mood. It makes you feel in a certain way by conveying something and puts you in a mood.

Due to music's capacity to express and evoke feelings as discussed previously, music was also used as a tool for regulating the self and the external environment to create a particular mood. Similar to the women interviewed in DeNora (2000), the pupils indicated that mood regulation was a primary use of music in their everyday lives. DeNora interviewed fifty-two British and American women between the ages of eighteen and seventy-seven. She set out to explore the role that music played in their everyday lives, and the extent to which music was used as an organising force. As DeNora (2000) states:

Nearly all of these women were explicit about music's role as an ordering device at the personal level, as a means of creating, enhancing, sustaining and changing subjective, cognitive, bodily and self-conceptual states (p. 49).

The pupils in my study described the importance of context and the social circumstances that are mediated by the music to create a particular atmosphere or mood. They described music's ability to control their psychological states in times of insecurity, loneliness, stress and most frequently when they wanted to relax or *chill out*, to use their own terms. In this regard, music offered them a sense of agency, control and autonomy, and was perceived as a consequence of the feeling and emotion that comprised music's fundamental meaning.

Bob: Music means mood because it makes you feel in a way that I can imagine anything I want to. Everyone needs it for that reason (Interview 2).

Zian: The main thing that makes music mean something to me is that it has feeling and so it can put me into a good mood or a thinking mood or just a chilling mood. It makes me feel in control in a way (Interview 1).

Mary: I basically listen to music because the songs put me into a certain mood. Like, music is about your feelings and emotions so when you hear it puts you in a mood (Interview 1).

Both Zian and Mary referred to the notion of control, recognising that music could be used as an important tool for altering one's psychological state of being. The pupils' use of phrases such as 'I need music' and 'I need to be in control' were used in a similar manner to those individuals interviewed in Crafts *et al.* (1993) and those women interviewed by DeNora (2000).

Some pupils also made reference to specific types of music or specific pieces they needed to listen to in order to put them into a particular mood:

Melissa: Music means hope too because some music just makes you feel like being in a dreamy mood where you can think about your wishes and make them come true. Everyone calls me a dreamer and it's true because when I hear music I love to just pretend and it just gives me hope (Interview 1). I listen to *Hero* by Maria Carey all the time, just to make me dream and feel special (Interview 1).

Kyoko: I need music so that I can like dream about things. Sometimes it like takes you into like a higher place. Like a fairyland where all your dreams can come true (Interview 1).

Karly: Music is about creating a feeling, expressing something so that I can be in a certain mood. I use music to sort of dream and think about things that are not in my real world you know (Interview 1).

Emily: It is so important for me to relax when I need to. And sometimes, I really need to be by myself and just tune out. I play Norah Jones almost everyday because makes me feel good and puts me into a chilling mood (Interview 1).

Other pupils mentioned needing music to control not only their internal state of being, but also the physical context within which they experienced music:

Mathilda: That is like just so important. I would say that it's about mood too or maybe atmosphere is a better word to make the place feel different (Interview 2).

Abby: Well, like you can create your own ambience and atmosphere when you put on music. You can really do a lot with music. I mean it can be used as a way to sort of control and change the mood of a place. The mood of a place gives it the atmosphere (Interview 2).

According to their testimonies, music affords a space for romanticism and fantasy. Egan (1990) addresses the important role of imagination and romanticism, as being essential ingredients for teenage agency and identity. Bruner (1986) spoke about the function of art in enabling individuals to be transformed into a state where hopes

and dreams can appear as possibilities. He called art an instrument of freedom, where one can free oneself from the reality of the present, offering the power to imagine, dream and hope.

While creating specific moods was important to the pupils, getting out of bad moods and creating personal space and refuge was also of fundamental importance:

Beatrice: When I am really stressed I need my favourite songs to relax and get away and be in my own world. I think I would just die if I did not have that (Interview 2).

Bob: My parents are always fighting so I just go into my room and listen to my music really loud. It makes me feel as if I am not there anymore. I am in my own world. I even have certain songs when I want to change my mood (Interview 3).

Andy: Music is the best way to get away from everything. Like to escape. When I am in a bad mood I listen to stuff and I get into a good mood and it's just about how the music makes you feel (Interview 1).

In the following, Zian focuses on this relationship as a performer:

Zian: Music is definitely a recluse and a sanctuary; gets you out of the monotony of everyday life and difficulties. When I am playing, I am really escaping into my own world. I am always in a good mood after I play (Interview 1).

The importance of being able to create one's own space, separate and apart from others and from the rest of the world – escapism – is an important aspect of identity, which is discussed later on in this chapter.

While the above statements of the pupils address the use of music as a regulating device on the personal level, it was equally important for the pupils to have music as a means through which they could share their mood and state of being with others on the social level. Amongst friends, the pupils describe the essential role that music has to play in creating a particular environment, as Lucy, Sola and Karen explain:

Lucy: All of my friends and me listen to loads of music together or we download music from the Internet together and then make our own CDs based on themes and ideas that we have. So when we want to be happy and jumpy we know what CD to run. And sometimes when we are sad or just broke up with our boyfriends we want to be soppy and listen to soppy music. We would be lost without music. Music is really mood (Interview 1).

Sola: The feel of the music just automatically puts me into a mood. Every single time I have my friends over the first thing we do is to put on music in my room sometimes blasting it so loud that we have to scream. It's a nice feeling when we just want to be alone (Interview 1).

Karen: Music is sort of mood, because when I was with my boyfriend for the first time, I was really nervous and I needed to have music to put us in a relaxing and loving like mood. It just made me really calm and then I was not so nervous anymore, and it got us both into a really calm way. I really needed music then (Interview 1).

Sola and Karen, along with a few other pupils in their descriptions allude to a shared yet isolated environment. They describe an environment which is shared within an almost intimate setting where they can be alone and undisturbed. This notion addresses Stålhammar's notion of *internal space*, which I discuss later in this chapter.

At the same time, however, other pupils described situations within which the environment was shared but open to others, as Beatrice describes below:

Beatrice: Music is really mood, because you can use it to create all sorts of atmospheres. The best thing for me is when I have parties. I love making the mood really happy and fun so that people can just come in (Interview 1).

## MUSIC AS COMMUNICATION

Music is a fundamental channel of communication (Hargreaves *et al.*, 2002)

Mathilda: Music tells a story. It communicates to us. It is communication.

The students' sentiments support the notion that music has meaning not only because it expresses feeling and emotion, but also because music communicates. The pupils spoke passionately about the different types of music to which they listened. They described their favourite songs and pieces of music and explained why they each held meaning for them, due to that which the music was able to communicate. They spoke of music as being able to communicate within and across cultures and time and place. They expressed music as being the most intimate, personal, social and universal means of communication.

Nadia: Music is definitely an accompaniment to almost everything we do in life. Music to me means [...] hmm [...] It means communication through everything for everything that we do (Interview 2).

Paula: Yes, can you tell me a bit more about what you mean by that?

Nadia: I mean when we watch TV, when we watch a movie, when we just go shopping, when we eat in a restaurant, when I go home and do homework, when I hang out with my friends, when I am alone and want to remember good times or somebody. I mean, it's like a constant form of communication. It also can be a form of communication to inform us about other people and inform us about other lifestyles and cultures. I mean, we can really learn about everything through music (Interview 2 continued from previous).

Some pupils referred to the various means through which music can communicate:



Thomas: Music means communicating personal feelings to other people because it appeals to our emotions, so it communicates emotions (Interview 1).

Janett: Music communicates what we are thinking. Through music we can share our ideals and beliefs about the world to other people (Interview 1).

Beatrice: It's the deepest way of communication across culture and societies because it communicates things that we feel and can't express in words but you can just feel in your body (Interview 1).

Thomas, Janett and Beatrice refer unwittingly to three dimensions of communication; an issue addressed by Lull (1987). Lull focuses on the manner in which young people use music as a form of communication and proposes three ways in which an individual can interact with music, that is, physically, emotionally and cognitively. He goes on to suggest that although musical participation may be personal, the social dimensions are most prevalent through the use of interpersonal communication. In addition to the three ways in which an individual can interact with music, Lull further suggests factors that influence musical interaction. Firstly, he uses the term *exposure*, which refers to the amount of contact an individual has with the music. The second factor is *consumption*, that is, the residue from what is learned or remembered from the exposure to the music. The third is *use*. These are the various personal and social factors which surround the musical experience. During a musical experience or musical participation any three of these elements may exist in any combination.

For Feld (1990) music is communication because it is the 'process of meaningful interpretation explicitly conceived as social activity' (Feld, 1990, p. 1). Musical meaning is therefore the combination of the context, individuals and the associations.

Interpretations of music are therefore subjective and within any musical activity, there are codes by which individuals derive some level of meaning.

Meaningful activity is subjectively experienced by social actors. In other words, we cannot speak of meaning without speaking of interpretation (whether public or conscious). By communication, then, I mean a socially interactive and intersubjective process of reality construction through message production and interpretation. By socially interactive, I mean that whether events are face-to-face or mediated in some way, we each apprehend the symbols and situations before and around us through various schemes of typification. We further assume that these schemes are not whimsical or idiosyncratic but that they are social, shared in large part, at least until evidence to the contrary is at hand (Feld, 1990, p. 2).

Musical meaning therefore includes and delineates the symbols and context within which the musical experience takes place.

Mary: Well, every song communicates something. Some songs communicate things that I believe in, so then it is meaningful for me, and then I just associate good things with that song (Interview 2)

Henry: Music is actually much more than just the notes we see or hear. It is actually about everything together and the feelings, moods and desires that we have (Interview 1).

Henry and Mary in their descriptions above, allude to a notion that a number of theorists have long acknowledged. Musical meaning is not restricted to the music itself (the notes, as Henry states), nor to the inherent meanings. Musical meaning, however, also encompasses the various messages and associations to which the

music refers or which it delineates: this is the main premise upon which Green's (1988, 2005a) thesis is based, which is discussed in the following chapter.

Karly speaks about the necessity to communicate through music. Communication was the most important aspect of musical meaning for him:

Karly: Music is definitely communicating. That is what I do when I rap. We communicate expressions and ideas and feelings and thoughts through the way we rap, the beat we use and the music on top of it (Interview 2).

Karly's description of music making and meaning was similar to the descriptions reported in Sönderman and Folkestad (2004). The authors set out to explore the music creation process of two hip hop boy groups in Sweden. In the creation of hip-hop music, the boys explained the central role of communication – the 'emcee' as communicator. The 'emcee' always has a message to convey, and thus the voice becomes the instrument which then has to fit into the beat and the music.

The pupils referred to music as being able to communicate messages and emotions, thereby bringing people together and forging connections amongst people, time and place.

## MUSIC AS COMMUNITY; TOGETHERNESS

Among all of the activities humans possess as a means by which to create such a powerful sense of identity and community, music may be among the most personal and the most meaningful (Herbert and Campbell, 2000, p. 16).

Andy: Music means togetherness. Just being with people, like a community.

This concept espouses aspects of all of the others and focuses primarily on the notion of togetherness, as the pupils describe it. Music is essentially a social phenomenon, and is often experienced within a community; some sort of social context. The pupils in their descriptions all referred to the various social contexts within which they experienced music. They described their musical experiences within their home in a shared setting with friends and family, or within church, at a performance or party. They were all aware of the integral role that the social context played within their musical experience. Following Green's (1988, 2005a) notion of delineated meanings which I shall discuss in the following chapter, the pupils spoke about the various associations of community and togetherness that particular pieces of music evoked. Both Beatrice and Omar refer to the delineation of 'Happy birthday':

Beatrice: Music can also be being together [...] or togetherness with other people. 'Cos every time my family gets together it is to celebrate a birthday or something. So, like, every time I hear happy birthday I just have to think about being together with my family or friends you know (Interview 1).

Omar: It means togetherness. Every time my family has a gathering we always have music there. We sing or we dance. It would be nothing without the music. And then, every time I hear the same music, I remember what we did. Sometimes, I like to remember things I did with my friends or family when I

hear some music, like when we hear the song happy birthday, it automatically means being together for a special occasion, like a birthday. Some music is just about that (Interview 1).

Music was a means by which the pupils in the study negotiated access into various groups and communities, as Merriam's (1964) category of music as social integration suggests. In the following, Mary describes the bond that music created between herself and the other members of the school choir:

Mary: Music also means togetherness for me, because it brings people together in ways that nothing else does. When I first moved to London, I did not really know anyone at all. I was really sort of lonely and an outsider, because I was new and began school when the year had already started. Everyone already had their group of friends and clans, and I knew it. But I knew I had to do something about it, so I turned to music (Interview 2).

Paula: What do you mean you turned to music?

Mary: I joined the choir! I was always singing in choir in my old school and was quite popular actually. So, when I joined the choir in my new school, I mean this one, from the first day I felt like I belonged. It is more than great because we are all just there doing the same thing and singing the same things and have a common goal. It really unites us and makes us feel special. That's what I mean by music really means togetherness (Interview 2 continued from previous).

Melissa: Music is really important to bring people together, cos like I wanna be a teacher when I am older so I really want to know more about music cos it's important. I think that it is the most important way for cultures and people

to understand each other. And that's how I use it [...] like when I listen to music, I really do it with friends and stuff to bring us closer or something (Interview 1).

Gerald: I know that when I become a missionary like in Africa I won't be able to speak the languages, but if I use music, it can bring us together. My mum was a missionary and she used music as her way to get into each of the cultures. It made the people just, like, laugh together, or dance together and they even sang when they did not know the words. Every person in the whole world can understand music, so of course, it brings people together (Interview 1).

In the following extract, Mina describes music as togetherness in terms of being with family:

Mina: Music means togetherness. It brings people together, although it can even push people apart. But it means togetherness for me like just being together or sharing things together or learning about other people. We can learn a lot of people through music and stuff. So yes, it is about togetherness (Interview 1).

The idea of togetherness is expressed here with reference to attending parties or church:

Abby: Music makes people come together. Whenever I think about music I just think about what it does for me like at parties and at church. Church is basically the music that we sing and play. It makes it much stronger and brings us all together as a group (Interview 1).

Mischa alluded to the notion of music as togetherness beyond the individual level towards that of culture and religion:

Mischa: Music means connection because it connects things together like feelings, beliefs, people, nations and, well, everything (Interview 1).

Similarly, for Sally, music forges links through time and place:

Sally: Music connects people together, but even more it connects history. When I sing folk songs from my country with my family we sing about the past and our ancestors and my grandparents sang the same songs. When I sing, I feel as if I am bringing all of us together in this place and time. You just feel as if we all belong together (Interview 1).

Henry: My music is what I use to connect to people. That is what the rapper and hip-hop scene is all about. We just all kind of share something you know, its is sort of our voice to the world (Interview 2).

Henry's reference to music as a means of socialisation, where music is seen as a 'social lubricator' has been addressed by Roe (1987) and further exemplified by the works of Willis (1978), Hebdige (1979) and Weinstein (1994). Cohen (1991), Finnegan (1989) and Bennett (2000) focused on the varied subcultures from rock in Liverpool, non-professional musical cultures in Milton Keynes, the hip hop cultures in Germany to the local pub culture in Newcastle, UK. Bennett explored how hip-hop was used to create a local form of expression.

As Campbell (1988) states from her own ethnographic study of children, music acts to unite and bring children together, thus offering a sense of belonging. The notion of belonging, as referred to in the last quote, relates to one's sense of identity, whether

in a group or as an individual. The conception of identity comprised the pupils' next conception of meaning.

## MUSIC AS IDENTITY

We communicate, therefore I am (Gergen, 1991, p. viii).

Gerald: Music defines who we are.

A number of authors have suggested that music during adolescence is particularly important for teenagers in addressing certain development issues, namely, affection, mood regulation, communication, recollection and peer group acceptance (Hargreaves *et al.* 2002). Egan (1990) further argues that imagination and romanticism are essential ingredients for teenage agency and identity in their construction of the self, as mentioned earlier.

Through music, an individual can come to define her or himself as an individual or as a member of a group (through defining themselves they are communicating to others their sense of self). With respect to the musical experiences of contemporary adolescents, Tarrant, North and Hargreaves (2000) addressed adolescents' reasons for listening to music outside of the school context. In their study, two hundred and forty-five 15-year-old adolescents from two schools were given questionnaires pertaining to the ten categories of potential reasons why they listened to music. The pupils were selected from one school in the United States and one school in the United Kingdom. Apart from background information, each participant was requested to indicate the extent to which each category represented a reason why they listened to music. The responses were rated on an eleven-point scale. In addition, they were asked to fill out an open-ended item about their musical experiences. Three adjudicators rated the levels of their musical experience according



to low, medium and high experience. Other questions pertained to the context in which musical experience occurs and social networks. The study took place over four weeks during classroom time and a time period of fifteen minutes was allotted. In light of the information given, the authors conclude that young people listen to music to fulfil primarily social and emotional needs, (a finding central to my own study) where self-identity was a central feature or, as a number of authors have acknowledged, *music acts as a badge of identification for young people* (Frith, 1981, Tarrant, North and Hargreaves, 2002, to name a few).

While I do not question the results, I feel that the approach taken within the study is similar to those discussed in the previous chapter: one-dimensional. In the first instance, the pupils' responses were confined to the ten pre-given categories, which may have limited the scope of response, in my view. Second, the questionnaire included an 'other' category; however, the reader is unaware of who the 'other' may be. This 'other' may be a crucial factor in explaining why young people listen to music. The conclusions may therefore not represent a helpful reflection of what the young people felt or wanted to express. I ask myself upon what basis can the authors decide if an experience is high, low or medium? The result represents the view of the judges and not that of the pupils. The study has nonetheless provided important information and confirmation of the role of music in identity-formation and representation amongst young people.

Tarrant, North and Hargreaves' (2000, 2002) confirmation of Frith's (1981) statement that music acts as a 'badge of identification' for young adults however, was clearly confirmed by the pupils in the study. Music is identity and served as a badge of identification. The pupils referred to several ways in which they defined themselves through music and were very explicit about how they used music for this purpose.

They described their use of music as a means of negotiating access into various peer groups, for example, as Sola explains:

Sola: Music makes like people get together because we all like the same things and share the same values through the music cus we all identify with the same things (Interview 1).

Some pupils alluded to music as identity on the personal level. This refers to the manner in which an individual displays or presents himself to the world through music.

Mina: Music is showing the world who we are through our stories (Interview 1).

Bob: It's a way we show the world who we are. When I play, I am doing just that and even when I just hang around and listen to music, I listen to music that relates to me and who I am (Interview 1).

Andy: Music is showing to the world who we are as humans and our lifestyle (Interview 1).

Richard: When I listen to music, I am like listening to something that relates to me and about me (Interview 1).

Anne-Sophie: Music is our identity as people (Interview 1).

The quotations below attest to the importance of style and taste in the formation of individual identity.

Kyoko: I listen to certain types of music based on the values that the music has. I like all sorts of music really. Sometimes I listen to jazz, sometimes

classical and even pop. I can like any type of music but the important thing is that I have to be able identify with it somehow (Interview 1).

Nadia: The type of music we listen to relates to what we people believe, and how we dress and how we decide to live our lives. Like, certain groups of people only listen to certain types of music because of the values. Like, most people who listen to rap music believe a certain life-style and even dress in a certain way (Interview 2).

Mike: In a way, music determines our lifestyle, I guess. Some styles of music are just about certain ways of living and thinking about life, actually. All of the music I listen to relates to something about me in some way. Music is about our identity (Interview 1).

Another feature that was addressed within the pupils' descriptions was the notion of memory. The pupils stated the need to go '*back into time to think about good times*', or to evoke memories of events, people and places. Music acted as a memory device, which is another salient feature of identity, a notion substantiated by DeNora (2000, 2003). The women in DeNora's (2000) study equally used music to take them back to particular events, people or experiences of the past. She refers to this as the 'reflexive process of remembering/constructing who one is...' (p. 63). In this sense, music's meanings relate directly to the particular context within which the music was experienced initially, and is transported into the present, as Joey confirms in his statement:

Joey: Music takes me back into time when I want to remember things that happened in my life. It's like a time machine (Interview 2).

With respect to differences in responses between the performers and the non-performers, two of the pupils described themselves primarily as musicians. They explained to me that:

Zian: Music is who I am because I am a pianist (Interview 1).

Or:

Mary: I am a singer. So music definitely defines who I am (Interview 1).

Mary and Zian have addressed Hargreaves *et al.*'s (2002) notion of musical identities as distinct from IIM in their descriptions. They both define themselves first and foremost as musicians and this relates to the manner in which they relate to the world. A few pupils when describing their musical experiences described why they liked their favourite songs. Comments such as 'It is just me' aptly describes DeNora's (2000) notion of 'finding the music in me – musically composed identities' (p. 66), where the individual can locate him/herself within the music.

### ***Musical Taste***

Musical taste, as the pupils recognised, was a defining factor for determining one's relationships within social groups. The pupils furthermore spoke about needing to like and appreciate certain types of music in order to evoke a particular image of who they were. This is the central premise upon which Tajfel's (1978) concept of social identity theory is based. This theory proposes that social identity and self-identity are inextricably linked. As such, individuals develop their own self-esteem through identification with social groups who exhibit a positive image. In the case of music, individuals will identify with those genres and styles which they think highly of, and distance themselves from those styles and genres which they hold in lower esteem. This process of valuing enables individuals to establish positive social and personal

identities. Tarrant (2002) supports this theory with empirical evidence through his exploration of the behaviours of both male and female teenagers in the UK. He focused on the manner in which individuals judged their own peer group in relation to others. Results revealed that there was an inter-group bias, where individuals gave more positive judgements to their own group than the other group, which Tarrant refers to as the out-group. In essence, this relates to the notion of using music as a badge of identification, discussed earlier. In the following, Liza and Erik support the notion of affiliation and differentiation:

Liza: Music can bring people together based on what people value and like (Interview 2)

Erik: Music can tear and keep people apart because some people just like different things and styles of music (Interview 1).

The pupils alluded in their descriptions to the importance of needing to show the world who they are, what they are like, and what their lifestyle is like. Identity, they described, was not only important on the individual level, but also on the social level. One's affiliation within a group can be mediated or defined through music, as the pupils described. Group identity is formed through music's capacity to bring people together to share common values and experiences.

Mary: Music is about things that a group of people believe in. it makes people feel as if they belong somewhere. Like in my choir we all like the same music and when we sing I just feel as if I am very lucky to belong to this (Interview 2).

Liza: We all stand for the same things in life, so it shows the world who we all are and what we all believe in together (Interview 1).

Additionally, the notion of delineations carried by music is also referred to here:

Gerald: Certain types of music are like certain types of way of living. For example, the hips all dress in a certain way and do different things and the skaters have their own group and the classical people are also in their own group. If you listen to classical music, then you are probably rich and, like, have a lot of money and go to operas and theatres. A lot of the rappers are black and are into drive-by shootings and they all dress with gold chains and [...] you can always tell who they are and they just belong together and can identify with each other (Interview 1).

Beatrice: Music basically creates groups of people in society. Every group is sort of divided by what type of music they like. All of my friends and I listen to the same music 'cos we just relate to the same thing (Interview 1).

### *Cultural and National Identity*

Identity through music also extends beyond the individual and the social to the cultural. Mary and Kyoko alluded to the importance of maintaining the distinct nature of particular religious and national identities through music, such as Indian music, African music, and church music, for example:

Mary: Music is preserving our religion. Some songs are used only for religious purposes and so when we sing them it makes us all identify with it (Interview 1).

Kyoko: We use certain types of music for ceremonies at home. Some songs mean certain things and we know how to respond. So for us music is very important to pass on our identity as a nation. Music is really communal (Interview 2).

The idea of national identity was mentioned by some of those students who came from immigrant families. These pupils felt the need for music to express and reinforce the feeling of where they came from, and music was a central means through which they were able to do so (this supports Merriam's (1964) notion of conformity to social and cultural norms). Herbert and Campbell (2000) indicate that the ever-increasing diversity of musical styles and genres available today are based on the various cultural identities. '*...culture and identity are together, and separately, the most important organising concepts of today's society* (p. 16).

Mary furthermore described music as a means through which she can present herself and her origins in a positive light so that others can learn about her culture and her world. She spoke about her experiences in church: singing in a gospel choir reinforced her identity as a Jamaican-African girl. It also confirmed her identity as a 'God-praising' Christian, as she described herself. Her music acted to distinguish herself in a positive way from others. In this sense, it was used in order to reinforce group connection and offered a sense of belonging and acceptance. At the same time, it acted as a sign of difference from others who did not belong to the group. It was inclusive at the same time as it was exclusive, a notion taken up by Jorgensen (1997) in her concept of spheres of musical validity.

## MUSIC AS ENTERTAINMENT AND PLEASURE

But all of us assert that music belongs among the most pleasant things, both by itself and with melody ... singing is the pleasantest thing for mortals; hence it is reasonable to expect it to be brought into social gatherings and pastimes, as being capable of providing good cheer (Aristotle in *Politics*, p. 235).

Thomas: Music is essentially expression, it's communications, it's togetherness and it's how we define ourselves as human beings. But above all, it's essentially something and means pleasure. It enhances our lives in many ways.

Music as a form of entertainment was identified specifically by a few of the pupils and mentioned as an underlying factor of music by the majority. The pupils described music's appeal and its capacity to bring pleasure. The pupils expressed that music appeals to individuals emotionally, sensually, socially and culturally. Because music expresses and communicates hopes and dreams, represents who we are and is about community, music is appealing. The pupils said music was *simply fun* or *entertaining*, *pleasurable* and *enjoyable*. They described music as *an accompaniment to everything that we do in our lives*, thus enhancing their everyday experiences. They described their favourite movies, for example, in which music played a fundamental role. *What would a movie be without music?* they asked, *what would life be without music? It's in us, around us, all of the time*. While the pupils acknowledged music as a highly cognitive activity, it was primarily for them a form of play in the sense that Csikszentmihalyi (1996) proposed. Play, for him, represents relaxation, a game, a form of amusement and an enhancement and distraction from everyday life. Play is an essential activity for creative productive work.



### *Differences in Conceptions between Performers & Listeners*

Each category of description of meaning was addressed by each of the pupils, by listeners and performers alike. Those who performed an instrument either formally or informally were able to offer more detailed responses in relation to their conceptions of music. They felt as if their meanings were somewhat more intense, as they were able to experience music along more dimensions than those who merely listened to music.

Zian and Mary, both of whom consider themselves to be musicians, commented on different levels of musical meaning. They both seemed to have suggested that musical meaning was dependant on the level of the participant's musical awareness.

Mary: I know that I am gifted because I can sing, and can sing anything that I want to. Music means more to me than other people because I understand it more (Interview 1).

Zian: I said what I think music means, and I do not want to say that I am better than my friends because I am a pianist, but I do believe that music becomes more meaningful if you know what it is about. I just hear the music differently and more intensely. Every time I hear Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4. I love it more and it means even more to me. I am sure that it does not mean anything to my friends (Interview 2).

### *The Role of the Listener*

Their comments suggest that musical meaning becomes intensified with familiarity to the musical material; the central thesis of Meyer (1956). According to Meyer (1956), meanings critically depend on how familiar a listener is with a particular style of music. A musical work takes on meaning only if a musical event arouses a listener's

musical expectations derived from other musical events: in other words, musical meaning is generated if the music leads the listener to expect a more or less definite consequent musical event. If a listener is not familiar with a particular style of music, he or she will not have any musical expectations and therefore will ascribe little or no meaning to that piece of music. Bob offers an example of his relationship to Jazz music:

Bob: I think that maybe sometimes like if you do not know a style of music or are not used to hearing it a lot then it could sound really off, and you just can't understand it. I mean, I hated Jazz music before we went to the concert. But then, I saw it and really listened to what it was about and they taught me about it and I rather like it now. I mean, I can understand what it is about (Interview 2).

The musical relationships within a given musical work account for the emotions it arouses within the listener, according to Meyer. These emotions are based on various degrees of expectation, which in turn accounts for meaning. Meyer (1956) distinguishes three different types of musical meanings. He refers to the first type of meaning as 'hypothetical meaning', which are those sounds expected by the experienced listener. I, for example can recognise this type of meaning with reference to my own experience as a performer and teacher. As a trained musician, I must constantly repeat a process of practice. In order to produce the correct tones and nuances during my practice sessions, I have to hear the music in my head in preparation for what I want to produce before I actually play it. Likewise, when I teach my pupils, I try to teach them to hear the music before they produce it. Hearing the music before the actual creation of sound creates expectations and a connection

between what has not been played and what will be played. These expectations may either be 'confirmed' or 'denied' (to use Meyer's words) as the piece progresses.

According to Meyer, these expectations allow for two other types of meanings to exist. He refers to the second type of meaning as 'evident meaning', which occurs when a listener retrospectively gleans causal relationships from the music. This occurs when a listener is able to understand the progression of sound from one note to the next. The third type of meaning identified by Meyer is referred to as 'determinate meaning'. Determinate meaning takes place when the listener looks back and reflects upon what he or she has heard, and subsequently tries to make sense of the music in its entirety. Thus, after a piece has been played, the listener is in a position to relate to the elements of sound and to connect their meanings to the overall structure of the music. This notion suggests that, during the process of listening, an individual mentally arranges the sound into some sort of meaningful structure, which produces the overall impression of the music just played.

There are however a number of unanswered questions to my mind. First, according to Meyer's theory, a person who is unfamiliar with a particular style of music will not be able to have any sort of meaningful experience. This implies that foreign music is simply meaningless. He has stripped the notion of expectation to one that is based entirely on a familiar musical structure. At which point does an individual gain familiarity with a particular style of music? Are we as individuals born into the world already familiar with a particular style? In a sense the pupils suggested that musical meaning can develop and become intensified through a process of familiarity; one which is accumulative.

With reference to the shortcomings of Meyer's thesis mentioned above, Feld (1990) explains that something must be recognised as music, as opposed to merely sound, in order to have meaning for the individual.

Taking this line of thought further, he goes on to propose that having meaning is not a matter of style or genre as Meyer has suggested, but rather a matter of context. Within one's own musical tradition, a single note or tone for example can be heard in a variety of contexts. Furthermore, Feld makes a distinction between stimuli within the external world. First, there are those stimuli which individuals take for granted and 'require no action or verification beyond physical presence or existence'. The second category contains those stimuli that 'incite engagement and choice' (Feld, 1990, pp. 2-3). For this type, individuals use 'typifications' or frameworks by which to ascertain what is being communicated. This assumes, then, that particular activities involve various levels of social interaction.

Meaning is, therefore, a process, not a fixed state as inferred by Meyer's thesis. In comparison to Meyer's role of the listener, Feld agrees that meanings will be largely dependent on the degree of familiarity a listener has with the music. However, his framework does not exclude the possibility of meaning being attained from the vantage point of unfamiliarity. Feld offers his own framework for understanding the process by which listeners find meaning within music. This process involves what Feld refers to as 'interpretive moves', which 'emerge dialectically from the human social encounter with a sound object of event' (Feld, 1990, p. 8). A move, for Feld, can be locational, categorical, associational, reflective or evaluative. 'Locational' refers to the positioning of the musical object within a field of similar items and events. 'Categorical' refers to the process of categorizing the locational objects into larger classes of events or things. 'Associational' refers to the association of the musical

object to non-musical forms of imagery. 'Reflective' refers to the relationship of the musical object to personal or social conditions, experiences and events. 'Evaluative' refers to the process of making value judgements. On that basis, Feld provides examples of how sounds can have various meanings in various contexts and depending on the level to which the listener is attending to the sounds.

Similarly, at a concert or club I can attend to the details of a piece in a certain way. I can do the same at home with a recording or a score, if such a thing exists for the piece in question. These levels of experience can also be combined. Moreover, having attended to the piece in any one of these ways, I am not able to attend to any of the other experiences in exactly the same manner as I did before. Experience is not only cumulative, it is interactively so. We rarely confront sounds that are totally new, unusual, and without some experiential anchors. Each experience in listening must connote prior, contemporary and future listenings. We consume as we produce, out of and based upon meaningful pattern and experience (Feld, 1990, pp. 5-6).

There is no hierarchy implicit within this structure; however, each move is potentially active within a musical experience. Meaning thus emerges as result of the various interactions between and among these moves. Referring back to the question of difference between listeners and performers in the meaning-making process, I conclude that both musical listening and performing involves an active process of meaning-making. Either as listeners or performers within the musical experience, the individual is a consumer, a negotiator with the musical material and its context. Recognition of this notion within the classroom may provide possibilities for more engagement amongst the pupils.

## LEVELS OF MEANING

An important finding which emerged from the research was the pupils' reference to various levels of meaning. Three levels of meaning can be deciphered as emerging from their descriptions. They consistently used the words *personal*, *social*, and *communal* (which refers to community) in describing their various conceptions of music. For example, music was not confined to simply meaning emotion or feelings in a general manner, but rather, as the pupils expressed personal feelings or social feelings. They described personal identity and group identity, they described mood on a personal as well as on a social level. As mentioned previously, musical meaning emerges as result of the various interactions and negotiations between the individual, the music and the context. It involves interaction and negotiation between and among the personal, the social and the communal levels.

I refer these levels not in terms of physical space, but rather in terms of the locality- that is- the sphere of negotiation between the individual, the music and the context within which the experience occurs. This notion partially addresses Stålhammar's (2003, 2004) notion of spaces of music, and Czikszentmihaly's (1984) four areas of musical meaning. Czikszentmihaly's areas of meaning refer to the relationship between the individual and the various contexts within which music is experienced. The first area he has located refers to the actual needs and desires of the individual. The second refers to self-interest. The third area refers to the community and family, while the fourth refers to the relationship that the individual has with universal values and meanings.

Stålhammar (2003, 2004) has identified and defined three spaces which he refers to as the *individual*, the *internal* and the *imaginary spaces*. For Stålhammar (2004), the individual space refers to a place of withdrawal, an environment for creation and

recreation (p. 7). The *Internal space* however refers to a space in which '– the door is shut on the external world, both literally and metaphorically' (p. 7). It is an isolated social space in which friends and chosen individuals can share within the experience. His notion of *imaginary space* refers to the signals that an individual gives to denote affiliation to a particular community. He describes it as the 'cultural borderland in the form of symbols, style and behaviour' (2003, p. 20). In this regard, it is related to social identity – those features which differentiate one musical group or style from another.

Based on the pupils' descriptions, I shall define the personal space as the personal engagement with music. This level relates in part to Stålhammar's notion of the individual space. Each of the pupils interviewed, regardless of whether they were performers or non-performers felt a strong emotional attachment and connection to music on the personal level. They described the personal level as that context within which they were able to release and reflect upon their most inner feelings through the music. It was, as in Stålhammar's *individual space*, a place of recluse, solitude and intimacy which is not shared. Several of the pupils described such instances of listening to music in their bedrooms with the head phones on, singing in the bathroom where no one could hear, or making up raps in the garage. It was a place of personal release and sanctuary at once.

I have defined the social level as referring to the musical relationship an individual has within a social context. It is the relationship between a group of people and the music. It involves the ability to share and communicate meanings with others. As discussed earlier, music plays a central role in the lives of most young people today. Most of their musical experiences occur within social context. All of the pupils described their musical experiences as having an important social component which

contributed to the meaning of the experience. This level relates to Stålhammar's notion of *internal space*. Based on the pupils' descriptions, this level involves situations such as sharing in a musical experience with friends or family. It denotes a 'closed' environment, to the extent that the group members are chosen. It is a context where identity, mood, emotional release and expression are shared.

The third cultural space combines elements of both the personal and the social and focuses on the level of identification to the wider community. Some pupils in the study referred to this level of community with reference to religion and ethnicity. Music was used in some cases to confirm cultural identity, and a sense of belonging to the wider community.



## SUMMARY

The pupils described six conceptions of music, each of which are linked to the uses and function that music serves in their lives. The conceptions are inextricably related to each other. Exploring pupils' every day conceptions of music provided a basis for understanding and gaining insight into what they think about music. It offered insight into their relationship with and through music and reveals information about the role that music plays in their lives.

Each category belongs to a nested structure, which combined, comprise *meaning*. Each category has been presented according to Marton and Booth (1997) in their requirements of an outcome space, as discussed in Chapter 3. Every conception as revealed by each of the pupils has been presented. The categories of conception have been presented according to frequency in response.

The most frequent response offered by the pupils was music as the *expression of emotion and feeling*. Whether through the act of listening, performing or creating music, emotional expression was what offered fundamental meaning to music. The second conception which emerged from the descriptions of music was *music as mood regulation*. Music played an important role in offering the pupils a sense of agency and control over their physical and psychological environment. By listening to particular pieces of music, they were able to create a particular atmosphere and mood. Third, the pupils referred to music as *communication*. They referred to the importance of music as communicating that which can not be expressed in words. They perceived music as being a form of communication beyond that of verbal language. Their fourth conception related to the notion of music as *togetherness*, which emphasised the social aspects of music. Their fifth conception was identified

as music as *identity*. Music represented both individual and group identity according to the pupils. Music as entertainment and pleasure comprised the sixth category.

Three levels of meaning can be deciphered as emerging from the pupils' descriptions. I have referred to these levels as the *personal*, the *social* and the *communal*. I shall discuss these issues within the following chapters in the context of the pupils' most meaningful musical experiences and their ideal curriculum for music in Chapter 7.

## CHAPTER 5: WHAT SCHOOL MUSIC MEANS TO PUPILS

### CONCEPTIONS OF MUSIC IN SCHOOL

Mischa: Music in school is about learning to become better at your instrument.

The previous chapter has identified the pupils' everyday conceptions of music. The main aim of this chapter is to move into the context of the school by comparing and contrasting their conceptions of music in school. The outcome space for the pupils' conceptions of music in school comprised two categories:

- Learning how to be better instrumentalists
- Learning about classical music.

Music was, according to the pupils, primarily focused around *'becoming appreciators of the western classical musical tradition'*. For the pupils in the study, music was about learning about classical music, composers, music theory and music history. They acknowledged the implicit repertorial hierarchy (as I have argued in chapter 2, this notion often persists today despite the inclusion of a wide range of musics in the curriculum), indicating that classical music was placed high above other types of music. While several of the pupils did concede that other types of music had been introduced into the classroom, they saw these occurrences more as *'filling in'* or *'trying to make us have fun'*. Furthermore, these activities were seen to be *'childish'* and *'outdated'*. All of the pupils in the study described music in schools as being instrumental in achieving particular musical objectives.

Tim: Music in school is about improving your skills so that you can be a better musician at your instrument (Interview 2).

Beatrice: Music in schools is about learning about classical music (Interview 2).

Bob: In school we just tend to learn the basic structures of music like scales, notes and harmonies (Interview 2).

Zian: It is about many things really, but more importantly about the way in which classical music is structured. This is to give us an idea about the basics of music (Interview 2).

Mike: Well [...] like it's really about learning how to be better at your instrument I think. And [...] well [...] it's also about learning about classical music I think (Interview 2).

Andy: I love music actually, I live for it and would love to have even more of it, but I think that it is not fair to concentrate on classical music. It sort of makes me not want to listen to it at all (Interview 2).

The pupils' descriptions concur with Stålhammar's (2003) findings. As discussed within Chapter 2, Stålhammar explored the views and perceptions of young people in England and in Sweden. The English pupils within his study were somewhat critical in their perceptions of music in schools. Further findings within his study revealed that the pupils associated classical music with school, compulsion, and control.

### *What is Classical Music?*

The consistent use of the term 'classical music' raised questions to my mind and I was interested in finding out more about what they meant by classical music. I asked them to describe and define the term, from which the following responses emerged:

Kyoko: Classical music like Bach and Beethoven music (Interview 2).

Karly: Its old music, which old and rich people only listen to (Interview 2).

Janett: It's opera and people dressed up playing on a stage (Interview 2).

Thomas: Classical music for me is [...] [pause] classy people in black and white sitting real proper (Interview 2).

Zian: Classical music represents the music of the past centuries in Europe (Interview 2).

Joey: High art (Interview 2).

Mina: Well, it is the basis of all other types of music in the world and includes composers like Beethoven and, and Vivaldi and orchestras and operas are also classical (Interview 2).

Amongst the responses offered, two of the pupils offered names of composers, and Mina indicated that it was the foundation upon which all other types of music are based. Several of the pupils, however, focused solely on the associations they held towards classical music. Classical music was for some the music of the well-educated, the well-off and the older generation. It was essentially music that did not have anything to do with them, their lives or their reality. In reflecting upon the pupils' descriptions, I am reminded of Green (1988, 2005a), in relation to the notion of alienation and celebration. I shall now introduce her theory of musical meaning with reference to the music classroom.

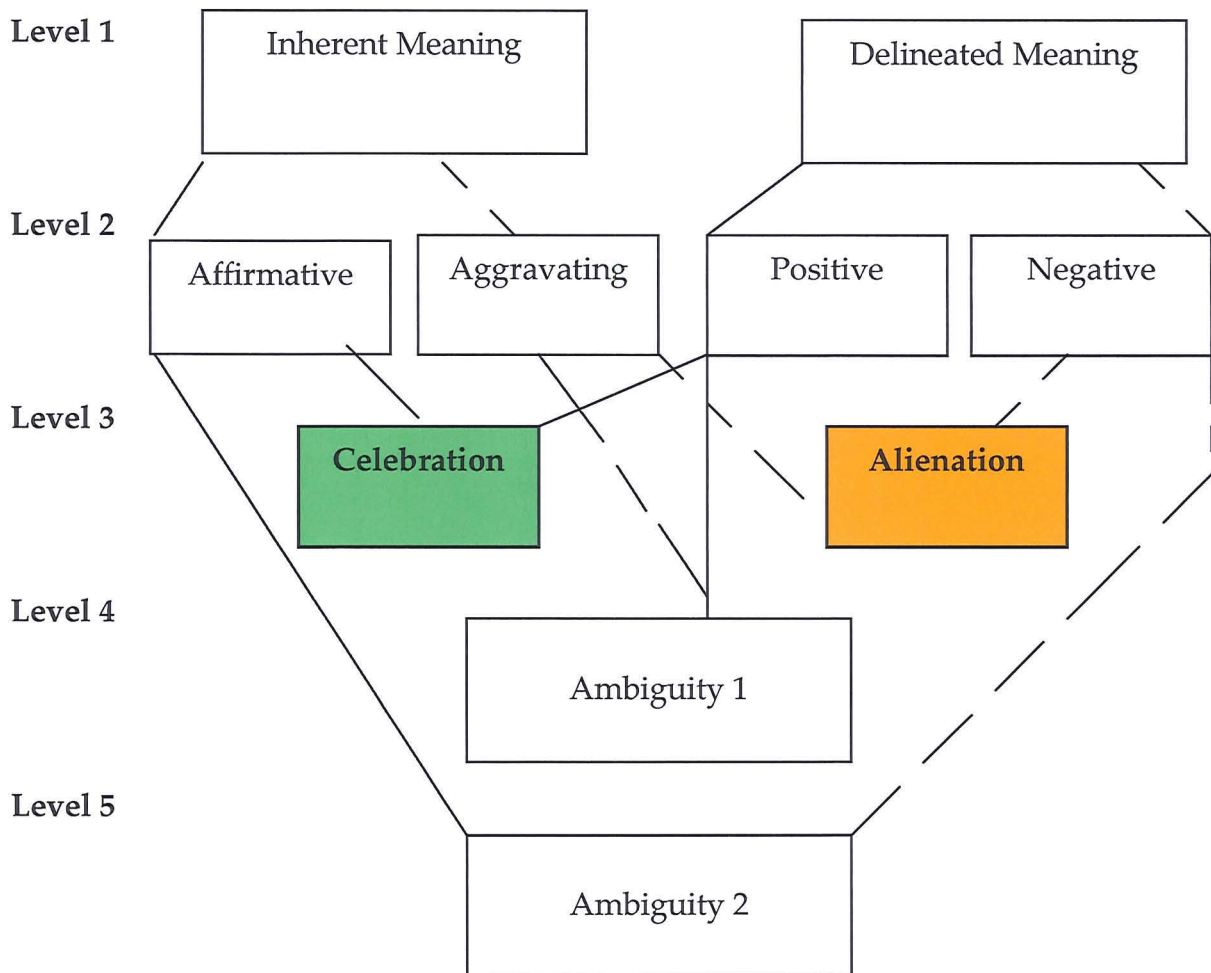
## MUSICAL MEANING AND EXPERIENCE IN THE CLASSROOM

Green (1988, 2005a) offers a concept of musical experience based on a dialectical concept of musical meaning, which includes what she refers to as *inherent* and *delineated* meanings. Within any musical experience both meanings exist and interact in a number of ways. 'Inherent meaning' is primarily concerned with the musical material. Musical experiences, however, can only be understood within the social context in which music is experienced. Music communicates images, memories, feelings and values, all of which become part of its meaning (Green, 1988, 2005a). These elements apply to the second type of meaning, which Green refers to as 'delineated meaning'. Green draws on the example of listening to a familiar piece of music from the past: the moment that old piece of music is played in the present, the individual is automatically drawn into the past, and associates that piece of music with a particular time, event, or place. As Omar's comment in the following exemplifies:

Omar: Everytime I hear violin music I just have to think about my brother, when he played at his first concert. He is always playing it at home and we always have to go to his concerts because he wants to be really famous one day (Interview 2).

Similarly, in the previous chapter, the pupils described needing to play particular pieces of music. This was because these pieces of music reminded them of past experiences or feelings which were associated with experiences. Delineated meaning therefore refers to the non-musical aspects which music conveys. The diagram below presents her framework for understanding these interactions:

Figure 1: Diagram of Musical Experience (Green, 1988, p. 138)



The two types of meaning – inherent meaning and delineated meaning – are located at the top of the diagram. In the case of inherent meaning (indicated in the diagram by a solid line), an individual can have an 'affirmative' response, which occurs when a listener is familiar and feels comfortable with the piece of music. On the other hand, 'aggravation' occurs when the listener does not understand the music and is not able make any sense of it. This is indicated in the diagram by a dashed line.

In the case of delineated meaning, Green has identified 'positive' and 'negative' responses. A positive response (indicated by a solid line) occurs when a listener feels as if he or she can identify with a particular piece of music. On the other hand, a negative response (indicated with a dashed line) occurs when the listener does not identify with the values or delineation of the music.

At Level 3; Green indicates that the quality of the experience of both types of meaning can create various responses. She has identified 'celebration' (indicated in green colour, at the intersection of two solid lines), which is what is experienced when affirmation is combined with positive inclinations. Green suggests that celebration occurs when a listener feels comfortable with the inherent meanings of a particular piece of music and is at the same time positive about the delineation of the music. I myself have had this experience of 'celebration', particularly whenever I attend a performance of Brahms's Piano Concerto No. 1. I am a classical pianist and trained in classical music, and am therefore familiar with the classical music repertoire. Brahms is one of my favourite composers, and my very first piano performance with an orchestra was performing Brahms's Piano Concerto No. 1. My performance of this piece was one of the most exciting musical experiences I have ever had. Each time I hear this concerto, I feel a great sense of familiarity, and I am taken back to my first performance of the piece and to the feelings that overwhelmed me at the time.

In contrast, 'alienation' (indicated in red at the intersection of two dashed lines) occurs when an individual is not familiar with the inherent meaning of a particular piece of music and has a negative view of its delineations. It is this experience of alienation that is often evident in secondary music classrooms. For instance, if a pupil who is not familiar with classical music and who has a negative association with it is



confronted with a classical piece within the school context, the pupil will be likely to experience alienation. Sally's comment provides an example of alienation with reference to classical music:

Sally: Classical music is essentially the music of the educated and wealthy people (Interview 2). I don't know about it really... just what we do in class, but it annoys me.

At Levels 4 and 5, Green has further identified two types of 'ambiguity' that occur when aspects of musical meaning are in conflict with each other. 'Ambiguity 1' refers to when the experience of aggravated meaning is combined with positive delineations. This occurs, for example, when a listener sees no inherent meaning in a piece of music but is attracted to its delineations. For instance, an individual may dislike opera music but enjoy the visual aspects of an operatic performance. 'Ambiguity 2' refers to when, for example, a listener enjoys listening to a particular pop group but dislikes the manner in which they present themselves on stage. As Andy's comment suggests:

Andy: I really like Usher and his songs, but I would never go to his concerts because I hate the way he moves and does all of these sex things to the girls. I know it because I have seen him on screen before (Interview 2).

By becoming aware of the various delineations that pupils have towards various genres and styles, teachers may be able to create an environment in which less alienation and more celebration occurs. This knowledge will contribute to an understanding of why some pupils respond positively to music in schools and why others do not. Moreover, knowledge of these meanings will permit teachers to reflect

upon their own meanings, which in turn will affect how teachers relate to their pupils.

Delineations can be very powerful in affecting one's relationship to music. Negative delineations can lead to disassociation, as in the case of some of the pupils. However, at the same time, creating positive delineations may play an important role in eradicating barriers and creating gateways to meaning within the classroom, as suggested by the pupils in their descriptions of their ideal curriculum in Chapter 7.

### *Feeling Left-Out*

The notion of feeling left out emerged repeatedly as another theme as the pupils described their experiences with music in school. A number of the pupils felt that the perceived focus on instrumental skills and classical music was too narrow and excluded a number of pupils from benefiting optimally from the music educational process.

Mathilda: Well, sometimes we do other music and stuff, but we do not really learn about it. I mean really learn and like get into it. [...] I feel left out sometimes because I do not do any classical music or play an instrument (Interview 2).

Karly: I do not care for music as such because we do not learn about music like we learn about history or math. We are told bla bla bla and we just do it. Classical music is a bit old modish I think. Since I am not into music like that it just turns me off sometimes (Interview 2).

Nadia: Music in school is there so that we can improve our music, so that we can play instruments and know more about instruments. I think that this is

OK, but at the same time really unfair for people who do not now how to play instruments (Interview 2).

Paula: Why is that?

Nadia: Well, because not all of us really play instruments as such. Some of us actually do not even have the chance really because it just costs too much. My parents do not have the money to pay for me to play an instrument. So, it's unfair. Like, the best ones in class are the people who all play something at home or take lessons after school. It even makes me quite jealous at times, because they are always the favoured ones (Interview 2 continued from previous).

Karly: It's about playing really well so that they can do exams (Interview 2).

Zian: Music is about learning to excel at whatever instrument you play. Although it is not so much about the actual instrument, but it offers us the skills to just improve. At the end of this year, we can then decide to go on or not (Interview 2).

Paula: Will you go on?

Zian: Certainly. I am quite good actually. Perhaps I may even become a Pianist and go to the Royal Academy where my father studied. I really need all of the help I can get. GCSE music is really the best preparation (Interview 2 continued from previous).

Mary: To do music for GCSE you have to be quite talented. Music in school offers us the facility to reach that level (Interview 1).

Thomas: It is about instrumental training I suppose. I mean, there is no way you can be good at music or even take GCSE music unless you are really good at some instrument like the piano or something. That's why I do not really, like, care for it. It has nothing to do with me really (Interview 2).

Those pupils who did not play an instrument felt at a disadvantage. Some pupils indicated that music in school was perceived as a preparation towards GCSE music, a finding substantiated by Bray (2000), Wright (2002), and Hallam (1998) as discussed in Chapter 2. The overall consensus was that one had to play an instrument, or have some sort of instrumental proficiency in order to be able to benefit most from music in schools. I was somewhat concerned about their reports concerning the exclusive focus on classical music. As I know that much effort is made in schools to include a number of various other types of music into the classroom, (see Appendix C and D for Schemes of Work), I had hoped for more positive reports. The pupils nonetheless felt an implicit musical hierarchy in action. While they certainly acknowledged the inclusion of other types of music, some pupils nonetheless perceived that the introduction of other types of music served as a break in between the more serious classical music. This was seen as a means of appeasing those pupils who were not involved with classical music (see Green, 2002). Moreover, the pupils felt that '*their music*', with which they were familiar and which they enjoyed was not taken seriously within the context of the school. I shall take up this issue further in Chapter 7.

### ***Time Allotment***

The amount of time devoted to a subject was seen as an indicator of its importance within education in general. The pupils stated that if music was intended to be

considered meaningful or important, there would and should be more time allotted to it in the timetable:

Gerald: The most meaningful subjects in school are those that we have to do everyday (Interview 1).

Karly: Music is just basically a filler-in subject. That is why we only have it once a week, actually (Interview 1).

Mina: Well, how can music be important if we do not do it everyday (Interview 2).

### *My Favourite Subjects*

When discussing what they thought about music in school, a number of pupils referred to other school subjects. Art was a frequent response offered by the pupils across both schools. The pupils felt as if they could express themselves and be creative in art class. Moreover, they said that art was related to their *own interests*.

Halina: Art is the best in school because it is really about what we want to do and how we express ourselves (Interview 1).

Sally: My favourite subject is art because it relates to my own interests in life and we are allowed to basically do what we want to do on our own terms... The teacher shows us what to do and then we are on our own to experiment and find out for ourselves what we can do (Interview 1).

Thomas: Music in school is about learning about theoretical stuff but, like, on a basic level. I mean this is good if you play an instrument or something but if

you do not have an instrument then it's just OK. It does not really mean too much to me though [...] it's not like Maths or Science or Art where you really need it (Interview 2).

Paula: Why do you really need Maths or Science or Art?

Thomas: Well, in Maths and Science you need it because we do it everyday in school and because everywhere you go around you have to like know Maths and Science, and Art is really important I think because you learn to be creative and make things and use your mind, and use your fantasy and just like to learn to be expressive in various ways. I think that this is really important for life, not to become an artist or anything, but to learn how to be individual and to [...] well it's like using to use your brain in another way (Interview 2 continued from previous).

Creativity and autonomy were also key prerequisites for a favourite and most meaningful subject:

Karly: in school music is there to help us to learn music so that we can play better instruments. I think this is OK, but I wish it was more like art where we can learn to be creative and just express ourselves through art (Interview 1).

Sally: Music in school is well [...] it is not really music the way I know it or like it. It is not really bad or anything it is just different. [...] hhhmm [...] It is about learning about and understanding classical music and sometimes some other music, but I don't really know why it is not that fun. I don't think that it's important because we only get it for 50 minutes a week. It's just sort of a break class I guess. It's not at all like art (Interview 2).

Paula What about art?

Sally: In art we learn about how to be creative, it's just really fun and exciting. Being creative is just really important for life I think, 'cos you learn a lot about yourself and how to express yourself (Interview 2 continued from previous).

Paula: Is music important for life?

Sally: Yeah, of course, but not what we do in school (Interview 2 continued from previous).

For Kyoko, the notions of fun and expression were important tools for creativity to be achieved:

Kyoko: The best classes are the classes which are really fun and creative. Like where you can be expressive and do some things on your own and make up things that are like just your own thing. For me, art and English are the best classes in school really, because they are both really creative and I am really good at them. Yes, I can be really expressive in them and I love to make up stories and make up things with words. Then we, like, read books and stories and we get to interpret them and discuss them in class. We learn to be really critical and see things from other perspectives. In art it's like the same thing actually, because we make up our own things and just express ourselves the way we want too. I find it very satisfying. It's like the teacher just, like, guiding us and we are all doing our own thing in a way (Interview 1).

Favoured subjects, as revealed by the pupils in their descriptions, permitted them a degree of autonomy and control. This finding was also confirmed by Macbeth and Sugimine (2003) discussed earlier.

### *Authority*

Another theme that was evident within the pupils' stories was the notion of authority, a finding which was also evident in Stålhammar (2003). The pupils for the most part perceived music in schools as being primarily structured around the teacher's knowledge and authority. They described the teacher's main objective as being the transmission of their knowledge onto the pupils, so as to enable them to become '*better musicians and appreciators of music*'. These descriptions illuminate this notion:

Mary: Well, it is about the teacher showing us how to become better musicians [...] like she shows us stuff about classical music and then we do the history stuff and then she plays some music and we listen to it (Interview 2).

Gerald: Music exists as a subject so that the teachers can show us how to be better at music (Interview 1).

Sally: The teacher's duty is essentially to offer us her knowledge so that we can understand and appreciate this music better. The thing is that they only know about classical music, so that is all they can teach us actually (Interview 2).

Music as expressed by the pupils was experienced as a topic that was external to their knowledge base and realities. The accumulation of knowledge was perceived to be passed down by the teachers onto the pupils and was perhaps one factor in explaining why they found music in schools meaningless. In the pupils' ideal curriculum in Chapter 7, they describe how they would address this issue.



*Non-Formal Instrumentalists vs. Formal Instrumentalists*

The themes that emerged were addressed by both formal instrumentalists and those who played or sang, yet did not take any formal lessons. There was indeed some difference regarding the responses from those pupils who did play an instrument formally and those who did not. Those pupils who did play an instrument on a formal basis were more favourable towards their conceptions about music in school. They were able to identify with more aspects of their musical experience in school, and feel *celebrated* by their experiences of music in school (Green, 1988, 2005a). Those who did not take part in formal music lessons were not necessarily negative, but expressed feeling as if they were not getting much out of their experiences within the music classroom. All pupils however remarked that they would like to have more out of their musical experiences within the school, a finding that confirms Hargreaves *et al.* (2002). They indicated that they wanted musical experiences that had a purpose and that enhanced their musical meanings.

## COMPARISON OF CONCEPTIONS OF MUSIC IN AND OUT OF SCHOOL

### *Conflict of Meanings?*

The pupils' meanings and conceptions of music in school bore little resemblance to their conceptions of music outside of the school context. The pupils mentioned the fact that music in schools was far too removed from the realities of their daily lives, and had little to do with their music outside of school, making it meaningless for the majority. The problem for pupils appears to rest in the disjuncture between music in school and music out of school; a notion supported by Pitts (2001), Sloboda (2001), Gammon (1996), and Green (2001) to name a few. For music in school to be meaningful to pupils, access to their meanings must be offered. As Campbell states:

Since children are influenced by their own personal and cultural worlds, they typically will examine that which they receive from their teachers, match it to their needs and interests, and discard the parts they do not find relevant.

The term *relevance* is of particular importance here and will be discussed further within Chapter 7 with the pupils' notion of *connection*. Regelski (2004) supports this notion in part by indicating that:

Since musical meaning arises from its use, and since use signifies musical value and meaning, the inability or unwillingness of typical students to use in their everyday musical lives what they are taught in schools indicates that music is meaningless to them or lifeless and impotent as to its action value (p. 29).

I partially agree with Regelski's (2004) general notion posed above. Although by using the terms *inability* and *unwillingness* I feel as if he is almost placing the blame or

the responsibility on the pupils as opposed to the schools. If it were up to the pupils, the situation would indeed be much different, as we shall see in Chapter 7. I propose that once the pupils' needs and interests are not met within the classroom, access to meaning is denied, and the experience is meaningless.

## SUMMARY

In sum, the pupils addressed four issues regarding their conceptions of music in school. Firstly, music in school was, as expressed by the pupils, primarily about the acquisition of musical skills and knowledge centred on the appreciation of classical music. Some pupils expressed that the main objective of music in school 'is to prepare the pupils for GCSE music', for which they felt strong instrumental facility was required. The general feeling was that those pupils who benefited most from music in schools were those pupils who had received formal tuition outside of the school context.

Second, while the pupils certainly acknowledged the inclusion of other types of music into the classroom, several pupils nonetheless perceived this as being 'taught as if it was classical music'. The issue therefore indicates that the musical content is not necessarily the primary concern, but rather the teaching and learning strategies. This is a critical issue which is taken up by Green (2005) and discussed in Chapter 7.

Third, the pupils further referred to a decontextualisation of school music with reference to the various types of instruments which were used within the classroom. Most of the pupils reported that when instruments were used in class, they often had nothing to do with those instruments they want to learn, or those instruments which played a role in their daily musical activities.

Fourth, the pupils compared music in school to other subjects. They described the prerequisites they required for a favourite subject. Their favourite subjects were those which enabled a certain degree of autonomy and creativity. Furthermore, their favourite subjects were those which offered the pupils some degree of expressive

space. These comments support Macbeath and Sugimine's (2003) study of favourite subjects.

While I was slightly disconcerted about the reflections offered by the pupils towards music in school, this was soon eradicated once they spoke about their ideal curriculum. While undertaking this task of thinking about their ideal curriculum, the pupils were somewhat more detailed in their responses and clear about exactly what they liked and did not like about their experiences of music in school. I noticed that this question offered the pupils a sense of control, autonomy, and even ownership (as they themselves mentioned). They took charge and dedicated much time and effort to responding to this question.

## CHAPTER 6: WHEN MUSIC IS MEANINGFUL

### MY MOST MEANINGFUL MUSICAL EXPERIENCE

Within this chapter, I present the responses to the question: can you tell me about your most meaningful musical experience? Each of the thirty-four pupils responded to this question to varying degrees. Some pupils needed a great deal of time to reflect and think about what their most meaningful experiences were and explained that they had more than one or even several. Two of the pupils initially stated that they did not have any meaningful musical experiences, but upon reflection came back to me describing what these experiences were. These most meaningful musical experiences ranged from musical performances that the pupils attended, a song on the radio, which captured the attention of those in the room at the time, a musical performance at school, playing within a band, to singing amongst friends in a bedroom.

While there was much diversity in the nature of the most meaningful musical experiences related by each of the twenty-two pupils, there were a number of distinct commonalities. The pupils' most meaningful experiences occurred along the personal, the social or the communal levels of meaning to which I referred earlier. Due to the limitations of this thesis, I have selected the stories of six to be presented in this chapter. I selected the six pupils to represent the variety and diversity in background and experience as reflected within the entire group. Firstly, I selected three girls and three boys to create an even gender balance. Secondly, I selected one pupil who is a formal musician, two pupils who are informal musicians, and three pupils who are active listeners as is reflected by the majority of the group. Thirdly, I wanted to present the ethnic diversity of the group and chose two pupils from

different ethnic backgrounds. Based on these three criteria, I present the stories of six pupils as they related their most meaningful experiences, followed by the main discussion.

## JOEY'S MOST MEANINGFUL MUSICAL EXPERIENCE

I will never forget how good I felt.

Joey is a 13-year-old British boy from London who comes from what he described as a *non-musical family*. His background is representative of the majority of the pupils within the group. That is, Joey was British, does not play an instrument outside of school, and listens primarily to the radio or rap, rock and popular music CDs.

His mother works as a nurse at a nearby hospital and his father works at a post office in London. Neither of them plays any musical instruments formally or informally. His parents occasionally listen to various Rock and Roll records from the 1960s and 70s but primarily listen to the radio. The radio is always on in Joey's household and appears to play a central role in the household.

He described his musical consumption habits as '*normal, I guess. I listen to music on the radio, all types of music basically all day, as soon as I get home until I go into bed*'. When he is not listening to music on the radio, he spends a great deal of his out-of-school time with friends hanging out and listening to music. For fun, they often take poems or make up their own poems and rap to particular beats. I was honoured with the opportunity to experience one of Joey's own raps about his life. It was a rap he made up a few weeks before. It was vibrant with various rhythmic structures, the poetry was appealing and I was impressed. His musical idol is Eminem:

Joey: I can identify with his style and his way of living.

Paula: Can you tell me about your most meaningful musical experience?

Joey: Yeah, like you mean even if I am not musical or anything?



Paula: What do you mean by not musical?

Joey: Well, I mean, like, I do not play an instrument or anything like that. Although, I sometimes think that I would like to [...] but [...] well, it is very expensive and my parents have to save a lot for the house. I mean, we have the chance to take lessons in school, but you have to pay for them. Well [...] [pause] hmmm[...] so, I have to tell you about an experience in music?

Paula: Yes, just think about any experience you had with music, which really meant a lot to you?

Joey: OK [...] the best time ever I had with music was with my friends [...] I think [...] I have two really great experiences with actually although (He puts his hands on his face and begins to laugh)

Paula: When was that?

Joey: It is a bit embarrassing (he laughs again) because my parents fight and yell at each other a lot. I hate it go into my room and listen to music over loud so that I can't hear anything (pause).

Paula: Why is that?

Joey: It makes me forget and just think about good things, I am in a different place, in my own world without yelling. And when I was about 11 me and Katie, mum and dad were all at the table eating and my mum yells at dad and they start arguing again. Like always. Kate and me were like tired of it and left and then they stop just like that, so I turn around to see what is going on. And then my mom was looking at the radio listening to this one song and she starts crying and laughing all together at the same time like a madwoman. My dad

too! (raises his voice and laughs) and then I just looked like something crazy is going on, and I starting laughing too. We were just all there laughing and mum turns up the music well loud and starts to sing along. It was well weird but funny and then mum says something about that was her favourite song when she was my age and she met my dad then. And me and Kate were asking them all these question what we did not know. It was so calm and we were all just close together having fun. I wish it never ended. It was as if in that moment, time had just stopped for us. I learnt a lot about my parents then and every time I hear that song I just think about that time. I will never forget how good I felt.

Joey's description of his most meaningful musical experience occurred within the context of the family. The music in his story played a number of roles and served a number of purposes. Firstly, on a social level, it provided the context within which the people involved were able to come together and share in the common experience. Joey initially claimed that music did not play a large role in his life or his family's because none of them played an instrument, composed or went to performances. At the same time, however, he described his household as one in which the radio is constantly playing:

It is just sort of on all of the time and we just do our own thing.

In this sense, music played an essential background role within their household. They eat to it, talk around it and once their attention is attuned, as in the case of his most meaningful musical experience, they sing to it. What made this experience with his family meaningful was that the music that came from the radio was able to bring his family together for that particular moment. The music evoked a personal emotional reaction from his mother, which brought back a past event into the

present, namely the meeting of her husband. For Joey, the experience appeared to be meaningful due to the 'togetherness' of the moment with his family along with the subsequent immersion into the past life of his parents, which the song had triggered. This event brought his family closer together and each time he hears that particular song, he feels the same emotions that he felt then, thus making it very personal, special and meaningful.

Joey's story is followed by that of Mary. Mary is a half-Jamaican, half-Ghanaian girl who sings passionately. She spends most of her free time singing in various choirs within and outside of school.

## MARY'S MOST MEANINGFUL MUSICAL EXPERIENCE

I was in heaven [...] It was like I was opening my heart to my class and I sang my heart out I did

Mary's experience revolves around her vocal performance in school. Mary is a seemingly confident 13 year-old girl from London. Her mother originally comes from Jamaica and her father comes from Ghana. Her mother plays the piano and organ while her father '*plays around*' (her words) with the guitar. At home she explains that music is always around, either on the CD player in the living room or when someone is practicing. Her musical diet consists of what she described as 'just about every kind of music from Gospel, Soul, Pop like on the charts, sometimes even classical and African music'.

She sings and describes herself first and foremost as '*a singer*' and explains that she has been singing since she '*can open her eyes*' and the family joke is that she started singing before she began speaking. Her earliest musical experiences occurred within the context of the church and, as such, the church has remained a central figure within her life. I asked her if she was considering taking music for GCSE, and although she loves music and does well in music in school, her response was:

If I am not classically trained and knowledgeable with the classical repertoire, I do not think that I will stand a chance.

Paula: Can you tell me about your most meaningful musical experience?

Mary: Whenever I sing.

Paula: Where do you sing?

Mary: I sing in church where mom plays the organ. I sing in the choir with a group and sometimes I get to sing alone – solo - on my own.

Paula: Wow, how often do you sing?

Mary: I sing almost every Sunday so it is not a big deal for me. But, for the first time last term at school my friend told my teacher that I am very good at singing. She made such a big deal about it and then the teacher and she made me sing for the class. At first I did not want to because I was a bit shy and everyone was just staring at me. But then, and then I wanted to do it and then I thought that I really have to do it.

Paula: Why did you feel that you had to do it?

Mary: Because no one really knows me in class, outside of my really close friends. I think that they just think I am some girl out there. But they have no idea about who I am and everything that I have to offer. I am somewhat insecure at times, actually. But then, I just closed my eyes, took a deep breath and pretended like I was in church.

Paula: And then what happened?

Mary: I was in heaven [...] It was like I was opening my heart to my class and I sang my heart out I did and everyone screamed and ran up to hug me. I felt so special. I really felt as if I was singing for hours. I even almost wanted to cry I did, and Miss told me that she did not know that there was so much talent in me. It was even more special than in church because I was showing my class about who I am. They wanted to know about gospel and about my culture.

Paula: What do you mean by culture?

Mary: When I sing in church I am singing for God and for me because it's inside of me and personal and then I am also singing with people in choir who are from my culture. Church is like a culture because we all pray together and believe the same things. It makes us feel as if we belong together. We are safe, we help each other. I feel special to belong to my church.

Mary's musical idols included Dolly Jackson, a name I must admit I had never heard of. She explained that she wanted to be and lead her life exactly in the manner in which these idols did. They dedicated their life to God through their voice. She described herself as being blessed with such a voice and feeling a sense of duty in sharing it with the rest of the world.

Mary described her singing as something very intimate and personal, yet at the same time social and communal, in particular when she sings with her choir on Sundays. Her most meaningful musical experience took place within the context of the school. It was meaningful because it allowed her to express herself and what she was feeling at the moment. She was able during this most meaningful experience to communicate to the class something about herself, her identity as a singer, and at the same time she was able to communicate something about her culture (as she defined it).

Mary described her most meaningful experience as giving her access to the classroom community. Her otherwise held-back and shy nature was eradicated in the moment in which she was able to sing to her classmates. She described often having felt misunderstood by her teachers and classmates, simply because:

I am just different than everyone else. But they didn't give me a chance for me to be who I am.

Through music, and her presentation to the class, she felt as if she had overcome this misunderstanding. She described her relationship to the class and teacher thereafter as being much better and she had developed more confidence.

Bob, on the other hand, is a very engaged and passionate guitarist who originally comes from Wales. Every song or piece of music he hears, he tries to play on the guitar. He describes himself as a self-made guitarist.

## BOB'S MOST MEANINGFUL MUSICAL EXPERIENCE

Letting it flow, that is the important thing.

Similar to Mary, Bob's most meaningful musical experience revolved around a performance. Bob performed at a club on the guitar. Bob is an 'informal' musician (I use informal here based on Green's (2001, 2005b) description of informal learning practices, discussed in chapter 7).

Bob had just turned 14 during our first interview. He comes from Wales and moved to London when he was 6 years old. He lives with his mum who is a secretary at a law firm. Bob grew up always wanting to play the guitar, as he explained to me. He has never taken formal lessons because they can't afford it, he says, but has a guitar and teaches himself. He occasionally plays for and every so often '*gets tips*' from a friend of the family who is a professional guitarist, as he explains. Bob has his own band, with which he has been playing for over four years. The band is comprised of four of his friends of his age group, all of whom play instruments informally. He spoke with passion about his band, and explained to me the importance of improvisation:

It means that you have to listen to your inner self and allow yourself to be free. You have to do lots of listening to other people and to your own self and then just letting it flow. Yeah, letting it flow, that is the important thing.

Bob is a good pupil at school and does well in music at school, although he states that he would like to have more opportunities to '*broaden my horizons*' at school.

Paula: Can you tell me about your most meaningful musical experience?



Bob: Music means the most to me whenever I am playing with my band and just improvising and stuff. Every time it is just like a new world. It's just really fantastic, like I am on a high, I mean I don't do drugs but it feels like that. Oh, this one time, I felt like a star when I went to Hads [...] its this sort of bar and hangout place where I live and, like, musicians just get together and jam sometimes. They are all older musicians, like, my mums age, but they are really good bands though, and this one time, I was there and got to talk to the band members. They were talking to me and we really related to each other and invited me to play with them in the next session. ME!! It was just amazing, fantastic and we were [...] they are of course professionals but we were, like, all on the same level. We are improvising and stuff together and just communicating on the same level. It's all about communication and there was such a connection. When I was playing I was just sort of doing my own thing and really trying to express myself. I was like letting all my inner feelings come out and get into it and then one of the other guys will then like play with me, sort of copying me but doing his own thing, and then we will play together and just improvise. We had to be so in tune with each other and everything. You have to listen to yourself and at the same time you really have to listen to what the other guys are doing, 'cos you have to be in sync. We really hit it off it was amazing. I really felt like at peace and proud with myself like I had done something amazing.

Bob's story is an example of an informal musician. His experiences of performing and descriptions of learning are akin to the interviewees reported in Green (2001), in that he described his process of learning as being one of:

Listening, copying and just experimenting really to see what happens, and each time you just learnin' from it, and then when we play together we learn from each other.

Bob's most meaningful experience with music was personal as well as social. On the personal level, he describes a sense of not only belonging and unity with himself and his surroundings, but a sense that he is offering his inner feelings and 'inner world' a voice and release. At the social level, he was able to communicate these inner feelings to others and share in a common experience of meaning with the rest of the band members.

His most meaningful experience also includes an important dimension of sharing and belonging to a particular community. In this case, he felt special for having been offered the opportunity to play with the group of men. They shared in the common experience, communicated together and formed a connection, thus making it even more special.

His description of improvisation was described as a process of allowing one's self to flow. I asked him what he meant by 'flow', and he referred to his inner feelings; everything that he feels at the moment is released through the music. He further described 'flow' as when the music is simply taking control of everything.

Flow, well [...] good flow gives the music a mind of its own. And being totally at peace with yourself.

Bob is followed by Mathilda. Similar to Joey, Mathilda also represents the majority of the pupils in terms of background. Mathilda originally comes from Birmingham. She does not play an instrument and has never taken any type of formal musical lessons.

Her most meaningful musical experience revolves around listening to her favourite song during her first meeting with her boyfriend.

## MATHILDA'S MOST MEANINGFUL MUSICAL EXPERIENCE

Music is my life, and it is the only thing I really have.

Mathilda is a fourteen-year-old girl who lives with her grandmother. She decided to move in with her grandmother, who she believes will offer her life some sort of stability, she explains. Her parents got divorced when she was 2 years old and she lived with her mother until shortly before the interview took place. Mathilda explained that she does *'not get on with her mother's boyfriends'*, and, as such, she is living with her grandmother. She describes herself as non-musical and her family in a similar manner. Her life, however, *'is music'* and she identifies very strongly with certain popular groups. She told me that other than her grandmother:

Music is my life, and it is the only thing I really have. It is always around me. I need it. Although I really love Art in school because I can really express myself and be creative. It really soothes the soul.

During her interview, she described herself as being totally non-musical, as are all the members of her family. She realised during the interview that she is always singing or humming, regardless of what she is doing. Whenever she is with friends, the first thing they do is to listen to music together.

Mathilda identifies very strongly with certain popular groups and in her interview she often referred to Kylie Minogue or Britney Spears as idols. Her most meaningful musical experience revolves around her first meeting with her boyfriend.

My most meaningful musical experience was when I got together with my boyfriend. We had sort of been watching each other for a while but I was too shy and afraid that we would not get along. I thought that we were really

different because he is a skater and listens to that kind of music, like skater music and I just thought that that he is in another world. But then, we had this school party and we kind of started dancing together and talking and [...] then I invited him to come over to my home after school so that we could just like get to know each other and stuff [...] I was soooo nervous and made myself up very pretty but cool and then I put on my favourite CDs by Atomic Kitten because I wanted the mood to be relaxed so I would not be nervous. At first when he came in we were listening to music and he was asking like 'who is that' and I was telling him about them and showing him pictures and my CDs and he thought it was cool. We were listening to music lying on my couch forever like we were already girlfriend and boyfriend. I always say that the music brought us together because it made me relaxed and comfortable to just not be nervous and then I was like showing him my world.

Paula: What do you mean by showing him your world?

Well, because the sort of music I like is about other things like my style and what I identify with the Kittens and my beliefs and stuff. Sometimes it's easier through music.

For Mathilda, music was her life and meant a great deal to her on a number of levels. Music provided a world for her with which she could identify. The world presented by her idols was one which she herself wanted to be apart of. It was a world that represented hope and success, as she described. Her choice of music thus offered her strength in being able to deal with her daily problems. When Mathilda felt that she needed to express particular feelings that were pent up, she needed to play particular songs that evoked certain feelings and sing along with them. This presented a sort of catharsis and release for her inner feelings, as she described.

Within her description of her most meaningful musical experience, Mathilda needed the music to create a particular atmosphere, in order to put her into a relaxed mood and frame of mind. Moreover, the music provided an entrée into her 'world' through which her potential boyfriend would be able to understand her. Mathilda believed that her choice of music was a reflection of her own identity, of her tastes and her lifestyle. Her experience was meaningful in that she was able through her personal identification with the music to communicate something of herself, her identity and, more importantly, to share it with her potential boyfriend. As with the majority of young people today, as presented within the literature in chapter three, music accompanied and created the background to Mathilda's life on a daily basis.

In the following, I present Zian, a very quiet and humble boy who plays the piano at grade 8 level and wants to continue music for GCSE. His story took me to his first performance at school.

## **ZIAN'S MOST MEANINGFUL MUSICAL EXPERIENCE**

Zian's most meaningful musical experience is somewhat similar to that of Mary. In fact the circumstances surrounding their experiences were similar in many respects. Both pupils, prior to their most meaningful musical experience, felt somewhat alienated from the school environment. They both expressed feeling as if they did not have a place within the school. They each spoke about not having any friends or people with whom they could hang out. In both cases, these pupils described themselves as being musicians. Music was their identity, and the principle means through which they were able to communicate.

Zian is a 13-year-old boy from China. He moved to London just short of two-years before the time of the interview. Zian was extremely soft-spoken but very articulate in manner and words. His parents were both professors in China. They moved to London because his father was offered a five-year contract with a research agency. Zian plays the piano and is considering taking music for GCSE as he thinks that he may want to become a pianist later on if he does well enough. He takes piano lessons from the music teacher of the school and spends the majority of his free time on the piano, he says. He does very well at school across all subjects. He enjoys music in school but desires more activities.

Zian: My most meaningful musical experience was definitely when I had my first performance in school.

Paula: What made it so meaningful?

Zian: Well, several things actually. The thing is that I was rather new to the school and my English was not very good as it is now. I had just come from China and was very insecure. My classmates were quite nice but I did not

have any friends as such. I think that they all thought that I was very different. I think that perhaps my teacher saw this and suggested that I perform for the school. She really supports me a lot.

Paula: Tell me about the performance.

Zian: Yes. I performed a Mozart sonata, which I had been working on with my teacher. It is my favourite piece, absolutely lovely. Then, I performed a piece that I composed on my own. It is rather difficult technically and really shows off my facility. I played and felt very comfortable. I was not nervous at all. In fact, I was just the opposite, I was even eager to perform for the school. I wanted to show off, actually.

Paula: Why were you so eager?

Zian: I wanted to offer my school something. I wanted to show them who I am and what I can do.

Paula: And did you do that?

Zian: Absolutely. I believe that music is for some the only way to communicate. It is certainly for me. My medium.

Paula: How did the school react?

Zian: [a broad smile] They absolutely loved it. They loved me, and even asked for a standing ovation. When I played the piece I composed, they were even screaming and clapping. This made me play even faster. I felt fantastic. I was definitely taken to a higher level of being in a way. I did not cry but I felt as if



my throat was a bit heavy inside. It was highly emotional. Since my performance everyone really looks up to me.

Zian described himself first and foremost as a pianist, similar to the notion described in Hargreaves *et al.* (2000). Performing for the school was his means of presenting himself to the school. Music was the medium through which he could communicate to his schoolmates and teacher his feelings, his personality, his talents, and more importantly his identity. It created a channel of communication between him and his schoolmates.

Lastly, I present the most meaningful experience of Halina, a non-musician and a girl who, similarly to Mathilda, lives for her songs.

## HALINA'S MOST MEANINGFUL MUSICAL EXPERIENCE

Halina is a thirteen-year-old girl from Surrey. Neither of her parents plays an instrument and she is not aware of what type of music her parents listen to.

Halina: I don't think they really listen to music or have much to do with it I guess. We all just do our own things really. I always listen to music on my own or with my friends in my room or outside.

She is a dedicated fan of popular and soul music but does not play an instrument either formally or informally. Her most meaningful musical experience occurred within the context of the performance of her favourite pop group Destiny's Child.

Halina: It was the most meaningful musical experience because for the first time in my life I was like in front of all of my heroes. I could see them there in real life and not just on the telly all of the time. They are sooo beautiful, they sing great and sing things that I can relate to completely. I just love them and want to be like them. All of my friends do.

Paula: Can you tell me more about this concert?

Halina: Hmm, my friends and I were just screaming and screaming as if we were crazy and I could not stop. It was just about the most amazing time we have ever had. After my throat was hurting and I tried to sing along the songs. I know them all. It was just the most amazing thing [...] [pause] I can't say [...] I can't really say more. It was just the most amazing thing. Every time I listen to them I think about their concert and me being there.

Halina did not go into great detail about the performance other than repeating that '*it was the most amazing thing*'. Halina's uncontrollable screaming was an indication of

an emotional high during the performance of her favourite group. It was an experience within which the notions of identity, emotion, and community were prevalent. In a later interview, Halina spoke about the importance of the songs to which she listens. Her choice of songs reveals aspects of her own life, and as such, whenever she listens to these songs, she is taken away into another world where she feels comfortable and is not alone. The notion of memory, referred to in chapter 4 was also addressed within Halina's description of her most meaningful musical experience. She indicated how much more special and meaningful listening to Destiny's Child became, as it brought back memories of the time in which she attended their performance.

## DISCUSSION

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, despite the unique nature of each pupil's most meaningful musical experience, I identified a number of distinct commonalities as the pupils reflected upon their most meaningful musical experiences.

*First*, all of the pupils referred to the highly emotional aspect of the musical experience. They spoke about being able to connect to their inner world of feelings, or releasing things they felt deep inside. The level of emotion that emerged from the musical experience was able to alter their psychological state, taking them into 'another world' or state of being. They referred to this emotional aspect on both personal and social levels of interaction.

*Second*, the notion of community and belonging was addressed by most of the pupils. They described either having felt a sense of unity within themselves, within a particular culture or as part of a larger social setting.

*Third*, several of the pupils highlighted the notion of identity in their description. This was particularly strong amongst those pupils who were performers, who identified themselves first and foremost as musicians. Through the music, they were able to identify with the larger setting through the communication and sharing of common values or ideals. For example, Mary spoke at length about the importance of being able through her music to communicate to her classmates who she is and where she comes from. In a similar vein, during his performance Zian felt as if he was opening himself to the world, in this case, to his classmates. Whereas these pupils were both somewhat shy and unpopular within the school, their music offered them the opportunity to present themselves in a manner in which they felt

comfortable. It also offered the other classmates entry into their world. Bob similarly spoke about being able to identify with the members of his band.

Those pupils who were not performers, also referred to the notion of identity through the music. For example, Mathilda and Halina described how their choice of music is a reflection of who they were. As such, in Mathilda's case, by playing her choice of music to her friend, she felt as if she was presenting herself.

*Fourth*, the feeling of *loss of time* was also expressed by most of the pupils in their descriptions. Descriptions such as '*I just lost track of time*' or '*I could have gone on forever*' or '*I wish it never ended*' substantiate this conclusion. With reference to the six pupils presented within this chapter, Mary, for example, spoke about feeling as if she was singing for hours, while Joey mentioned that he felt as if the time had stopped in that moment. Similarly, Bob mentioned that when he plays, '*the hours pass by like minutes*' and Mathilda stated that she was lying on the couch '*forever*' and wishing that it would never end.

### ***Flow / Optimal Experience***

Fifth, in this regard, the majority of the pupils' stories could be characterised as flow or optimal experiences as proposed by Csikszentmihalyi. I was quite interested in listening to Bob's description of flow, as it featured very similar elements to that of Csikszentmihalyi's concept. The ecstatic feeling which was described by Halina and Mary's description of being *in heaven* are further examples to support this notion. Csikszentmihalyi maintained that artistic activity is able to offer a sustained supply of opportunity for flow experiences to occur. Moments of flow occur when there is a 'sense of discovery, a creative feeling of transporting the person into a new reality' (Csikszentmihalyi, p. 74). While Csikszentmihalyi's notion of flow emerged from

experiences with adults, the narratives revealed by the pupils in the study offered qualitative and empirical support to his notion of flow.

Czikszentmihalyi in the following outlines a number of prerequisites for which a flow experience can occur:

First, the experience usually occurs when we confront tasks we have a chance of completing. Second, we must be able to concentrate on what we are doing. Third and fourth, the concentration is usually possible because the task undertaken has clear goals and provides immediate feedback. Fifth, one acts with a deep but effortless involvement that removes from awareness the worries and frustrations of every day life. Sixth, enjoyable experiences allow people to exercise a sense of control over their actions. Seventh, concern for the self disappears, yet paradoxically the sense of the duration of time is altered; hours pass by like minutes, and minutes can stretch out to seem like hours. The combinations of all these elements causes a sense of deep enjoyment that it is so rewarding people feel that expending a great deal of energy is worthwhile simply to be able to feel it (1990, p. 49).

He further describes flow experiences as moments in which the individual loses his or her orientation of time and place, a recurring description revealed by the pupils in the study. Finally, each of the pupils described their most meaningful musical experiences as encompassing an element of fun-of great pleasure.

## SUMMARY

The pupils' stories contextualise the pupils' conceptions of musical meaning discussed in the previous chapter, where identity, mood, communication, feeling and emotion, community and entertainment were critical factors. The pupils' most meaningful musical experiences were those which occurred within the three musical levels identified earlier, the personal, the social and the communal. Each experience provided the arena within which their layers of meaning could be activated. In the following chapter, I present the data that resulted from the pupils' descriptions of their ideal curriculum for music.

## CHAPTER 7: THE PUPILS' VISION OF THE IDEAL MUSIC CURRICULUM

### GATEWAYS TO MEANING

The pupils' descriptions of their ideal curriculum for music reflected their musical needs and desires. As I attempted to follow their thought processes, I realised that they pondered heavily first and foremost about what music meant to them, and then thought about how this meaning could be incorporated into the classroom. The pupils' curriculum for music revealed three main categories of description, each of which relate to various levels of access or *connection* to use one of their words. These levels of access were directly related to the three levels of meaning, to which I referred earlier; the personal, the social and the communal. Their curriculum acted as a gateway to meaning – a space within which the various levels of meaning are accessed.

### GATEWAY TO THE PERSONAL LEVEL

Joey: It's all about finding a connection somehow. Then it's like we are turned on (Interview 3).

The pupils highlighted several factors that were critical for facilitating access and finding a connection to meaning on the personal level. The most underlying factors were the notions of ownership and belonging.

#### *Ownership: 'Our Music' and Enhancing our Personal Relationship to Music*

The notions of ownership and belonging were highlighted amongst all of the pupils to varying degrees. They described two dimensions along which this notion can be



facilitated within the classroom. First, they pointed to the importance of using their music (*our music*, to again use one of their expressions) as a basis to learning. They believed that having music to which they can relate and to which they have an emotional attachment was a means of gaining access to their personal meanings within the classroom and creating a personal point of identification. Second, they expressed the need for a creative basis for music in schools. They believed that creativity was a means of unlocking the emotions and feelings that an individual has. It was furthermore an important medium through which personal emotions and feelings can be expressed.

Andy: We just need to find a connection somehow, with the music we like, with what we can do, with our feelings and what we like (Interview 2).

Abby: I think we should bring in music what we really like and then learn about it and then learn how we can make that type of music or learn about how we can express through music. Some of us who do not play an instrument would like to understand that better (Interview 2).

Sally: I think that since music is about feelings and emotions, we should really focus on that. I would allow everyone to bring in their favourite songs at the start of the term. Then I would structure my lessons around that. If the people do not feel any emotional connection to the music, then there is no way to reach them. That's how I would open them up (Interview 2).

Thomas: I would make our classes so that [...] mmmmm [...] we would learn better if we could relate to it better. We just get bored and muck about when the music is weird for us. We like to learn but the teacher needs to know what turns us on (Interview 2).

Janett: If I were to make up a curriculum for music, I would make it so that the pupils all feel as if they are really a part of the class. Everyone listens to music like everyday and it's so important. I think that it is different from the other things at school because everyone has a really close relationship to music. Music tells people a lot about who we are, so when we bring in music we are bringing something about ourselves (Interview 2).

The pupils here have suggested that using music with which the pupils are familiar, and with which they can identify, creates a means of gaining access to their layers of meaning. Music as identity and the expression of emotion and feelings are important components. As revealed in the quotes presented below, Tim, Henry and Karly along some other pupils made continuous reference to the notion of 'their music and our music'. What exactly did they mean by 'our music'?:

Tim: I think that music is music, and there is good music in all styles and there is bad music in all styles. Our music can be just as good. We should all learn about all of the ways to make music. What I do is not really considered music in school I guess.

Henry: Even things like my music of music like rap or hip-hop are not always bad and could have some great educational value. I think that we all basically want to learn about all sorts of music so that we can just understand everyone better. It is very important to understand what sort of music we like and listen to. I think that it is very damaging to make some people feel as if what they listen to is not educationally important (Interview 2).

In probing further, I discovered that the pupils were generally referring to forms of musical engagement which were familiar to them. This did not only mean the music

to which they listened, but also the various musical activities in which they engaged- the forms and structures of those musical activities. Karly spoke at length about his love and talent to make up rap tunes and feeling 'boxed in' at school because it does not enhance his own musical talents and desires.

Karly: Rap is sort of not really a style, it is but it is really about the way you do it. You can rap in any style if you are good. The key thing is that you have to be quick and smart at the same time you have to listen. I think this has a lot of educational value if you ask me, but teachers just look down on it without knowing what it is really about (Interview 2).

The pupils in their responses refer to the varied musical landscape which make-up their daily lives. They felt as if music in school espoused a narrow approach as to what music entails and how it should be approached, thus missing out on much of what exists outside of the school walls. They furthermore refer to a range of musical activity which they felt were undervalued because it did not fit into the framework of classroom music. Similarly, the pupils interviewed in Jaffurs (2004) felt as their garage band music would not be valued highly within the school context. They kept their musical lives outside of school separate from their lives within the school. It was only after the teacher-researcher engaged in dialogue with the pupils and entered into 'their musical world' that she was able to begin to understand and appreciate their various conceptions of music and music making. She concludes that:

'What they are trying to communicate to me is that they really enjoy music. So much so, that they want to listen to it, perform it, and create it themselves' (p. 198).

This confirms the statements made from the pupils in this study. They wanted school music to acknowledge and incorporate the music they enjoy and the musical activities that they *do*. In this regard, the verb 'musicking' used by Small (1998) I feel is appropriate here. For Small, music is not simply an external object or thing which exists in the world. But rather is an activity, an active process of meaning making in which individuals engage.

Musicking recognises and values all forms of musical participation, and this is the central argument of the pupils. He further defines musicking as the 'celebration of human relationships' which provides a matrix within which identities are formed. Musicking always occurs within a social context and involves various identities in relationship to one another. It is not only the expression of personal identity, but concerns the way in which an individual expresses their relationship to other people, to the natural world and to the world beyond. 'Musicking is therefore the exploration, affirmation and celebration of these relationships' (Small, 1998 p. 56). I can partially relate this notion to the various levels of meaning I identified earlier. My conclusion is that musical meaning is the process of negotiation between the personal, social and communal levels.

The pupils point to the need for a basis upon which they can initiate this process of negotiation. It seems therefore that 'their music' refers to their *musicking* – and is not limited to the styles or genres of music to which they listen, but is a process – one of familiarisation. By introducing music in a manner which somehow relates to them, it opens space for meaning. I shall expand on this issue on later.

### ***Creativity***

The majority of the pupils addressed other means through which this access can be facilitated, namely creativity. They highlighted the importance of active participation

within the music educational process. Creativity was seen as a means of communication- transporting inner feelings and emotions; it was seen as a means of a form of motivation and self-satisfaction, as expressed by these pupils:

Emily: I think that it is really important for music to be expressive because that is what music means. What is music without expression and feeling? We should learn in school how to be expressive and how to understand what expression is (Interview 2).

Richard: We kind of have to feel as if the class is about us too, you know what I mean? I think that it is also really important to be creative. I mean then we can learn to express ourselves and our feelings and understand better how other people do it (Interview 2).

Mike: We should all learn how to be creative because it's not only about just listening and talking about things but also about doing things on your own and creating something which just belongs to you can feel proud of and it is a reflection of everything that we are and feel (Interview 2).

Gerald: I think that we should learn how to be creative so that we can communicate things through music and we could learn about how other people like famous people or pop groups and classical music communicates things through music. This is just as important as learning a language (Interview 2).

Being expressive and creative was seen as a means of establishing a connection between the individual and the classroom. It offered a sense of ownership, and created a space within which they could be free to create something new, to communicate what they wanted to, to show others what they wanted to. Creativity

offered a context within which the pupils were able to negotiate access to the various levels of meaning. Being creative opened up space for the expression-the expression of feelings and emotions, of identity and ideas. The pupils' descriptions address an important aspect of flow (Csikszentmihalyi) as discussed in chapter 6. Similarly something akin to the pupils' descriptions of belonging and ownership is addressed by Clifton (1983). He speaks about a sense of commitment and possession when an individual attends 'to something they believe'. During the experience, an individual has to possess it before any meaning can be made out of it. Possession is therefore the prerequisite for meaning, and involves the act of believing, the act of feeling and the act of freedom, the act of caring and willing. This process involves a 'coming together' of the individual and the object (Clifton, 1983, p. 286). Personal meaning must be afforded space within the classroom, and this can only be facilitated by highlighting the centrality of individual experience as the starting point to learning (Reimer, 2003).

## GATEWAY TO THE SOCIAL LEVEL

Nadia: Music in school should be allowing everyone to learn together and from each other.

### *Learning Together – Collaborative Learning*

The pupils highlighted two central themes across the social level. The first theme concerned collaborative learning, learning with friends, and with other pupils. They recognised the various benefits of collaborative learning suggesting that:

Bob: I would ensure that part of every class we have to learn in groups. Sometimes we can choose our groups but sometimes not. I think that everyone has something to offer in music even if we do not play an instrument and we would be more motivated to learn this way (Interview 2).

Karen: Rule number three would be that we would learn in groups, and share what we have done. We can do different activities together and see what the other groups have done. Sometimes we do group work but it should be more often (Interview 2).

Stephan: If we could learn together we could also connect to each other more (Interview 2).

As the pupils revealed, they wanted the opportunity to learn from and with others. Their classroom was a place in which pupils could learn and work together as a community of learners, not only as individuals. Several of the pupils expressed that they felt as if they would be able to learn better within a group setting. They felt that the peer pressure effect could act as a support device and form of motivation.

Furthermore, they believed that each pupil had a role to play in assisting other pupils.

## **TWO-WAY DIALOGUE: THE PUPIL VOICE; THE TEACHER AS FACILITATOR**

Richard: They need to ask us about who we are and what we can do. I think they can learn from us too (Interview 2).

Secondly, they also referred to the notion of communication as dialogue-as a means of getting their voices heard. An important message that I have taken from this research undertaken with the pupils is that asking pupils about what they think has enormous potential for the classroom. At the base of their ideal curriculum, the pupils expressed a fundamental need to have their voices heard, as argued by a number of authors discussed within the literature (Johnston and Nicolls, 1995; Lincoln, 1995; Pollard and Filer, 1996; Dahl, 1995; Ruddock, 2003).

Due to the recognised highly personal and subjective nature of music, the pupils place a high priority in the classroom on the exchange of ideas, thoughts, and meanings between the teachers and pupils. The pupils pointed towards the importance of having a teacher who listens to what they have to say. They speak about the music classroom as being a place of sharing:

Liza: Music in school should be a sharing between what everyone knows and what the teacher knows because I know that everyone can learn from other people. The teacher's job should be to make us appreciate music better and not to turn us off of music (Interview 2).

It ought to be a place where pupils and teacher alike can talk, discuss and critique all different types of music:



Sally: At the start of every term the teacher should take some time to ask everyone about what they can do in music and what they like. It is very important for the teacher to understand where we are with music and then she can base the lessons around that (Interview 2).

Nadia: So many of us think that music now is so boring and we just see it as sort of time out from the other things because we do not feel as if it helps us at all. I would like to understand music better when I listen or hear things but I do not know how and every class should help us to understand it better. We should, like, all talk and critique all types of music and analyse it so that we can see it and hear it from different perspectives like we do in English (Interview 2).

Karly: I love hip-hop and rap, right, and sometimes I make up my own tunes and raps. Some people think I am the bomb, really good and talented and all that, but I wanna understand music more so that I can get better. There is no way that I could do anything with my tunes in class. It is not right music for class but I would do it for sure and then I could show the teachers what I can do too right? (Interview 2)

Gerald: I think that we are all musically talented somehow. But I think that we all should be given an equal chance to just not only to show what we can do but also to say what we want to do and, like, talk about it in class. We may know just as much about some music than our teachers and maybe we can all learn from each other. You know, it's like everyone has a role (Interview 2).

The pupils recognised the present authoritative role of the teacher and explained to me that teachers ought not to fear any loss of control within their ideal curriculum:

Ann-Sophie: Teachers should not be afraid of losing their authority when we may know more than they do. They just have to see through our eyes sometimes, and change their learning ways differently (Interview 2).

Melissa: I mean, I think that the teachers now would be really fearful of like losing control of the class when they we have so much say, but that is silly. We want to learn, but they just have to be as equally open. We all need to listen and learn from each other (Interview 2).

As these pupils expressed, their ideal curriculum would be structured around a two-way process of interaction between teacher and pupils on equal levels. The pupils would have a voice and say in the music class to the same degree as the teachers would. It is a curriculum in which everyone would have a role to play and a contribution to make. The teacher's role would not be one of authority, as it is at present, but rather one of a facilitator.

Following a similar principle, Vulliamy and Lee (1976), Swanwick (1999), Mellor (1999), Jorgensen (2003) and Green (2001, 2005b) propose a school curriculum that embraces a similar notion. They propose a process by which the pupils experience the subject matter from personal interaction with the subject, as opposed to being accumulated as second hand information from an authority perspective. They propose a curriculum that embraces an interactive dialogue between teachers and pupils. Supporting this notion further, Jorgensen states that such a curriculum should take into account the various meanings held by each of the individuals involved. Furthermore:

Curriculum is not just a set of topics that the teacher sets out and reviews during the instructional process [...] it is a dialogue between teacher and

student - and student and student - that is invested with meaning for all concerned. Students' interests, abilities, and ideas are enlisted in what becomes a life-changing process charged with intrinsic meaning rather than characterized by extrinsic rewards and products (p. 81).

Introducing a two-way dialogue approach, however, would entail the recognition on the part of the teachers of their role as a partner in the learning process. As Sally indicates:

Sally: Once the teachers get used to the fact that we all want to learn and that we all have something to offer, then they will feel more secure and be willing to may admit their own shortcomings and be open to learn too. They will always be teachers, and we will always respect that, but we will respect them more if they respect us too (Interview 2).

### **GATEWAY TO THE COMMUNAL (COMMUNITY) LEVEL**

Connection beyond the personal and social levels was also highlighted within the pupils' ideal curriculum for music. They referred to the necessity of *going beyond the familiar* and highlighted the notion of *music as communication* and, again, music as *identity* as a means of facilitating this journey. They highly valued music from different cultures as a means of gaining insight into those ways of life. They acknowledged the universal nature of music, stating that music exists and is appreciated in all cultures. Music is an expression of that which is fundamentally human for the pupils. The central message of their descriptions was that understanding other cultures and societies can only be achieved through understanding one's own, as Mike expresses:

Mike: The more we really, really understand what music is about, I mean, like the music that we listen to everyday and understand how it is made and stuff, then we can be in a better position to understand other types of music. Because music is about culture. And then when we compare it we can see our type of music in a different light (Interview 2).

Mike's argument echoes that of Reimer (1992). The importance of finding a connection between the individual within the classroom and the 'foreign' was seen as critical in addressing issues of acceptance and intolerance:

Nadia: Like, I was saying before that I think music is about and means communication. So, in school we really need to learn about people from all over the world and music is the best way to do this. Everyone has music in their culture and it's like travelling to other countries (Interview 2).

Gerald: We travel to see different things and learn about different places. But we can do this through music. Then we can understand how other cultures use music and communicate through music. Maybe we will see that we are not so different, actually (Interview 2).

Mathilda: I would design it so that we have to learn about how music can communicate things - how you can use music to communicate feelings, emotions or maybe how other people from other places in the world can feel the same way about music. I think that also when we learn about other cultures, then we can learn to accept them more (Interview 2).

Alexandra: Just like last year when we were learning about Indian music, we all thought it was funny and then our teacher told us about the history and stuff. We learnt all about it, and they are people just like us but they have a

different way of expressing things. Sometimes, it's even the same things they are expressing. I learned a lot about Indian culture and now I don't laugh anymore when I hear the music (Interview 2).

Radhika: It's like musical history and musical geography. Music can make us see things about people and cultures we never seen before. It makes us really get into the culture and how they are. I would make it so that each class we learn about a new culture. Then we can know how people communicate things through music. I think that would be really cool (Interview 2).

As expressed in the quotes above, an important component of music education according to the pupils should be the acknowledgment of not only the pupils' musical cultures, but also other cultures that formulate the world's musical landscape as a whole. They perceived music as a direct point of entry into gaining insight into other cultures. Moreover, they wanted to be challenged and viewed the understanding of foreign music as a basis for challenging their own assumptions about their own music and about the world. A further dimension within their curriculum was the importance of having real and authentic musical experiences.

### **AUTHENTICITY AND REAL EXPERIENCES**

Introducing real and authentic musical experiences was seen by the pupils as an important component towards facilitating access to meaning. Musical understanding and appreciation was best facilitated when the music was presented within its context and not extracted from it. The pupils in the study recognise the need to have real music, real live performances and musicians as an important part of the educational process. They were aware of the social context within which music is produced and created and the detrimental effects of extracting this context within the

learning environment. Part of learning is about seeing what the music is all about, seeing what people do with it and how. Some of the pupils alluded to their experiences at musical events and how much they had learned from the experience. This was for some a source of inspiration and motivation. Real experience was a critical factor which separated dead art, as they described classroom music, to living art, that which is practiced by real people in the real world today and now. The pupils in the study felt, for the most part, that music in schools was removed from reality, making it obscure and unappealing.

Jonathan: I know that music now in class is sometimes not really having to do anything with what music is really like in the world. It would be important for the children to see what musicians are like and how they play and what they think and how they like it and how they became musicians (Interview 1).

Erik: I would bring in musicians into the classroom so that we could see how they really play. I would not only make us only listen to tapes because this could get boring. I would also make us go to more concerts, so we can really learn about how musicians are and what they do (Interview 2).

Henry: I would bring the pupil to where we live so that we can see how we are, and what music we all listen to. We have a lot of things where I live (Interview 3).

Mathilda: We need to have a connection between the classroom and the outside world (Interview 1).

Mina: I would take everyone to concerts all the time and have the musicians come and play for us. Then we can see the music live and it makes it alive.

Maybe when people see the music, then they would want to play it too (Interview 2).

Sally: It is really important to bring us to reality [...] we need to see how things really are [...] how the music is made and played, and we should be allowed to ask questions, like what they are thinking. We could learn a lot from that (Interview 1).

Candice: Last year we went to a performance of some music. It was really good. We got to meet the artists and talk to them. I got to play too and we all played around at the end. We did not want to leave (Interview 1).

The pupils' description of real and authentic experiences is addressed in the literature by Swanwick and Lawson (1999), Kushner (1999) and Knight (2003). Swanwick and Lawson (1999) introduce the notion of authenticity, which comprises real-life experiences and real-life contexts. Kushner (1999) and Knight (2003) similarly argue that much of the changing knowledge base of music today comes from youth culture and from the community. Both authors argue that school music could benefit significantly by pulling in those resources that exist outside of the school.

The pupils refer to this as a disconnection, whereas Kushner refers to this as a gulf between music education and the music curriculum (the musical divide). He argues that the primary task for music education researchers should be to bring 'together knowledge production with knowledge use' (p. 215). In relation to the theories of musical meaning presented, he is suggesting that music educational researchers ought to acknowledge the various context within which musical activity takes place, in addition to the value and uses it serves in the lives of individuals. Moreover, he

proposes 'to look again at what music education might be by looking at what it is' (*ibid.*). In order to move forward, Kushner suggests that we need to tear away from 'official knowledge' (p. 218) and use research to explore 'unofficial knowledge' (*ibid.*), that is, the knowledge which is available to young people, a notion which substantiates the basis for this present enquiry.

Another sub-theme that emerged addressed the type of instruments used within the classroom. The pupils addressed the importance of introducing 'real' instruments into the classroom, rather than old and outdated instruments such as xylophones.

Beatrice: Even when we get to play, it's like on baby instruments. I mean who uses xylophones? (Interview 1).

Omar: The good instruments are only for older pupils I guess (Interview 1).

They wanted to learn the instruments they listen to every day outside school:

Mischa: We should learn real instruments in schools like then because we can get an idea of what it is really like. We should learn guitar, drums, bass you know the instruments that we can use in a band (Interview 2).

Janett: I think we should all learn whatever instruments we want to learn like the violin (Interview 2).

Students who did not take formal music lessons expressed the desire to learn an instrument, but were hindered by the present classroom structure.

Zian: If you don't have money to pay for instrumental lessons outside of school, then you are at a disadvantage in music (Interview 2).



## UNIFICATION VERSUS FRAGMENTATION

At the same time, when offering insight into how their curriculum would be best structured, the pupils spoke in terms of dualistic structures. They pointed to the importance of having a balanced structure, that is, one that includes the various elements of music and everything that music stands for in a holistic manner.

They spoke about creating a balance between listening and creating music:

Kyoko: I would have a combination of everything, like, not only theory, but also lots of practical work so that we can learn how to use the theory that we learn. Then, I would have learning about classical music or old music but just the same as new music and modern ways. Then I would have it that we have to have some making of music so that we can be creative and learn to be expressive and then listen to other music to experience how everyone else expresses and are creative (Interview 1).

Richard: There has to be a balance and I think that music in school should be fun because it is fun. We should listen and play and create (Interview 2).

They furthermore spoke about creating a balance between work and play, a notion supported by Clifton (1983) and Dewey (1934):

Halina: My curriculum would combine play with work. Music in school should be as much fun as it is about learning. Plus, I would want to learn more if it's fun at the same time. This is why I think music is somewhat different from other subjects, like since because there are so many ways with music that can be entertaining and appealing to us (Interview 2).

Sally: Music has to be fun really so that everyone really wants to learn more. It is work but should be fun at the same time (Interview 2).

They highlighted the need for creating a balance within their curriculum. This balance was needed between what they describe as art and life, listening and playing, process and product, theory and practice:

Zian: Theory is important so that we have a basis. So we will all have to do theory in my curriculum, but we would also just as much practical stuff. We would have to compose on computers and make up pieces on cool instruments. So, we can put theory into practice (Interview 2).

Gerald: We should have a balance between theoretical things and practical work all the time (Interview 2).

Nadia: Music in my school would be about the whole process of music making and creating, and not just about looking and learning about what other people have done. My music class would be about learning and discovering the secrets behind music production, going behind and understanding the scenes, then making my pupils do their own productions. They will learn about how to produce and make their own CDs, and through this they will learn about different styles of music from different places by doing their own thing. This way, they will appreciate all music better (Interview 2).

Tim: My ideal curriculum will be based on the process of learning and, you know, really learning about the whole process of music making. It just has to be really, really balanced (Interview 2).

Bob: Yeah [...] about learning how to do things, like about musical production, like how to actually go about doing things and making music and even the kids who do not play an instrument should learn how to do this in class. Class should really be about learning how to make music instead of just learning about the music from old people who lived hundreds of years ago (Interview 2).

Thomas: My ideal curriculum will be based on music that is living today and around us and not only on things that are like dead art. In order for the class to appreciate dead art we have to learn about living art too. We learn about the evolution of music in a way. So both have to be equally important (Interview 2).

The pupils' visions further support those of Chitty (1991), who believed that an educative experience cannot be separated from experiences in life. Effective education, therefore, involves the dualities of life, as presented by this pupil:

Mina: The best thing would be to have everything so that everyone can relate to it by combining everything like new music and old music and playing and reading music and having real live musicians and old composers. This way we can understand the past and the present at the same time. It should be about life! (Interview 2).

Supporting that claim, I quote Chitty who argues that a curriculum in the future:

would aim to move between – on the one hand – issues arising from the lives of learners and – on the other – the general relationships which structured those issues and those lives. Likewise, it would move between everyday common sense and formally-organised conceptual systems. It would not

centre itself on a universalism that concealed the presence of specific social interests; nor would it limit itself to a 'curriculum of everyday life', confined to the local and particular (Chitty, 1991; p. 85, as quoted in Richards, 1998, p. 183).

Jorgensen (1997) argues for an egalitarian approach whereby all players within the system are equal partners in the process of music education. It is an approach in which there are a number of alternatives, and where all players need to have their voices heard, and to reflect critically. She furthermore argues for an approach in which, similar to the pupil's vision, creativity and imagination play an important role. She advocates an approach in which, as the pupils have suggested, music is learned as a process of constant discovery and not just an end product. Finally, as discussed in Chapter 2, several authors have argued for music education to be studied as a world phenomenon as opposed to a predominantly western phenomenon. It is an approach that reflects the entire range of human experience not separate from it:

A dialectical approach is one which espouses and poses the dualities of musical experiences. It's a life long as opposed to school-age pursuit. (Jorgensen, 1997, p. 92).

Once again, the pupils' ideal curriculum sets out the prerequisites for flow experiences to occur in which the individual sees the object in a holistic manner during the experience, where dichotomies, polarities and conflicts come together.

## RECOGNITION OF 'MUSICKING' AND INFORMAL LEARNING

The pupils' conceptions of school music and music in their everyday lives reveal two central issues which may lie at the heart of the 'problem'. The first issue concerns the manner in which the musical material is presented within the classroom context. Although effort is being made towards including various forms of music, it appears, from the pupils' descriptions that it is presented in such a manner that the pupils do not recognise it as being familiar to them. 'It becomes like classical music when we do it in school' was Erik's comment and aptly sums up the sentiments felt by a majority of the pupils. The pupils' definition of classical music did not solely denote a particular genre, but essentially was that which is foreign-'the other' – that which is unfamiliar and has nothing to do with their day-to-day lives. At the same time however, they were open to music of all sorts and wanted to enhance their musical understanding in other areas to expand on that what they already know. They were searching for a connection, a way of turning the unfamiliar to the familiar – a way in which 'other' music could relate to them somehow:

Radhika: They should let us have more control on what we are doing. I believe in learning by doing in whatever way which works the best for each person. Then you can learn about anything and make it relate to you (Interview 2).

Abby: Well [...] I would make it so that there should be music that we can all relate to somehow. It does not only have to be one type of music or anything. I mean [...] I think that we can all, like, relate to all sort of music if we just learn about it more [...] and how it relates to you. You know what I mean? They just need to know how and allow us to find our way (Interview 2).

With reference to the 'how', to which Abby refers, the pupils in their descriptions of the ideal curriculum for music addressed the importance of self-directed learning, peer group work, observation and listening, playing and copying by ear. These issues essentially lay out a framework for informal learning and teaching strategies, an issue which has been addressed by Green (2001, 2005b), Jaffurs (2004), Sönderman and Folkestad (2004).

Green (2001) offers insight into the learning strategies of popular musicians. She identified and analysed the various skills which popular musicians use and the means by which these were acquired, by offering an empirical study of fourteen British popular musicians who ranged in age from 15 to 50. She set out to explore how these musicians' informal learning practices may offer possibilities for formal music educational practice. Green defines informal learning as the variety of approaches and practices utilised to acquire musical skills and knowledge outside of formal settings (p. 16). She refers to formal music education as those practices of classroom and instrumental teaching, training and education. This incorporates those issues mentioned by the pupils in Chapter 5, where learning is structured around a curriculum or syllabus, and where teacher control is exercised. By contrast, informal learning practices generally involve two approaches. First, the pupils describe the importance of pupil autonomy, sharing and cooperation where the teacher acts as a facilitator as opposed to a sole authoritative figure. Second, they refer to the notion of 'leaning by ear' and 'learning as it comes' as opposed to following a structured curriculum. Finnegan (1989) defines the formal as: 'publicly validated' whereas informal music practice incorporates an 'apprentice-type process' (p. 136).

One of the central messages I have taken from Green (2001) is the notion of pupil autonomy – that popular musicians gain their knowledge through their own process

of learning as opposed to being taught and receiving second-hand knowledge passed down to them. They are in control of their own learning. This notion presents a number of challenges to music educators as it suggests a shift in the role of the teacher. The teacher becomes a facilitator, as the pupils suggested earlier in this chapter. This notion also demands a redefinition and reassessment of the concept of musical learning. Much of music education practice to date is centred on Western classical ideals and notions. Despite the inclusion of a variety of non-classical music, the learning and teaching strategies within the western classical tradition are nonetheless embraced and applied to all.

Bob when describing his music making indicates that:

Bob: It is not at all like classical music that you see. We have to really concentrate with each other and watch and listen to everything that they are doing, because we do not have music books to use, you have to just pick things up. It is not like in school where everything is structured, we have to be really flexible and things are always moving and changing, and sometimes you do not know what is going to happen next (Interview 2).

As Bob's music-making reveals, informal practice entails experimenting with various instruments, copying from recordings, and improvising. The second aspect involves a social aspect with 'peer-directed learning' through observation, imitation and talk. Motivation, co-operation, self-directed learning, learning based on personal choice, observing and listening are key components within this process. Learning is not structured but emerges as an on-going process, based on the skills and motivation and the individuals.

Sönderman and Folkestad (2004) reveal similar results regarding informal learning strategies. Their study focused on the musical practices of two teenage hip-hop boy groups in Sweden. Their results reveal that their practices were centred on collective effort and peer-directed learning. Musical proficiency is centred on three types of skills. The first skill is based on technical proficiency-that is, the ability to use the equipment. The second is economical skill, which refers to the ability to work with different beats. The third refers to the various social skills which are needed to cooperate, listen to and work with peers. The central element within this particular process of hip-hop creation is that of communication. In this particular process, there is a distinct separation between the music and the text. Only at the end stages are the two brought together. The manner in which the emcee communicates is also skilful and involves a great deal of improvisation, listening and observation.

Karly in his description of 'his music making' reveals that:

Karly: rapping is so much more than just learning about music, but we are actually doing different things and using a lot of skills which we could do in school I think (Interview 2).

This is a central point. Much of what the pupils all described in their ideal curriculum for music is a curriculum which incorporates these informal learning strategies. According to what the pupils had to say, formal learning environments could benefit greatly by using these informal learning strategies to create a more living, contextualised and meaning-enhancing environment for the pupils.

This is the issue upon which Green (2005b) has focused most recently. She provides an empirical basis for implementing those learning strategies previously identified within the classroom environment. The main objective of the study, which is



currently on-going, is to explore the potential benefits of including some aspects of informal learning music practices in the school. The initial ethnographic study reported in Green (2005b) included three classes of 13-14 year-old pupils from four schools and six teachers, which included two newly qualified teachers, and four heads of music within West London. The pupils were offered the opportunity to bring in their own music, an option which the majority of the pupils in my study highlighted as being an important component of their ideal curriculum. The pupils were furthermore requested to form what she refers to as 'friendship groups'. This introduces the notion of collaborative learning, as suggested by the pupils in my study, and is an important component of informal learning practice. The groups were given between three to six music lessons to copy and then perform a chosen song. After group selection, a period of listening to their chosen song on a CD player and discussion took place between the pupils. During the discussion, the pupils identified various musical features, and decided which instruments to use. The teachers acted as facilitators, observing the pupils and intervening only upon request. While the project is still in its exploratory phase, it addresses a number of issues which this study has raised through the pupils' voices. Heightened levels of motivation, critical listening, and positive engagement within the music classroom, are some of the outcomes which this study has revealed. This leaves much potential for further exploration.

## THE CONCEPT OF MEANING AND EXPERIENCE WITHIN THE CURRICULUM

The social and cultural contexts of musical actions are integrated in musical meaning and cannot be ignored or minimised in music education (Swanwick, 1997, p. 2)

Based on the premise that the construction of musical meaning is an active process, the role of music education, therefore, ought to focus on enhancing the musical experiences of pupils, and should enable pupils to have meaningful experiences. In his discussion of the concept of experience with regard to education, Dewey (1934) proposed that some experiences within the school environment can be 'mis-educative'. By this he means that a school experience may be negative by arresting and distorting the growth of further experiences. He argues that when experiences within the home and the school are disconnected from each other, the pupil's energy will easily become dissipated, leaving little desire to learn (similar to the notion of the 'gap' expressed earlier). This provides us with a possible explanation of why some pupils may not be interested in school music. Dewey perceives experience to be longitudinal, ever-developing and constantly flowing along a continuum. According to this line of thought, anything experienced in the past will shape what is experienced in the present and future. Thus, for Dewey, experience is cumulative. In considering this theory in relation to the present study, I have interpreted this to mean that musical experiences within the school could be enriched for pupils if they could build upon those experiences that they have outside of the school context.

I believe that the individual who is to become educated is a social individual, and that society is an organic union of individuals. If we eliminate the social factor from the child we are left only with an abstraction; if we eliminate the individual factor from the society we are left with an inert and lifeless mass.

Education must therefore begin with a psychological insight into the children's capacities, interests and habits. It must be controlled at every point by reference to these same considerations. These powers, interests and habits must be continually interpreted-we must know what they mean. They must be translated into their social equivalents-into terms of what they are capable of in the way of social service (Dewey in Eisner, 1994: v).

Similarly, the National Curriculum explicitly states that in order to meet the demands as stipulated within the inclusive framework, teachers ought to be aware of and build upon the interests and everyday experiences that children bring into the classroom.

As Swanwick and Taylor state:

If we can accept that the main objective of all music education is to enable people to appreciate music, that is to value music as a life-enhancing experience, then we have not only the best possible basis on which to build a curriculum but also the only real satisfactory justification for music education that exists...Music is not an alternative to living but an enhancement of life. The role of a music teacher is therefore to develop the ability to respond to music in the fullest possible way across the widest range of experiences (Swanwick and Taylor, 1982).

According to Swanwick, the basis of music education should be the development of musical understanding. Musical understanding comprises four main kinds of knowledge. He refers to the first kind as the '*know how*' to do or use things. The second kind is '*knowing that*'. He describes this area as for example, knowing that 2 plus 2 equals four or that a violin has strings. The third type of knowledge refers to

what he describes as '*knowledge of acquaintance*' that is, 'knowing it', 'knowing her' or 'knowing him'. This refers to knowledge about a particular type of music or genre, composer or group. The fourth type of knowledge refers to *what's what*, and entails 'knowledge about' what we like as individuals, what we value and appreciate and the associations we have. Relating this concept to Green's theory, one can infer similarities between Swanwick's *knowledge of acquaintance* to Green's (1988, 2005a) notion of delineated meaning. Acquaintance is acquired through familiarity in use and context. Swanwick's *knowing that* and *what's what* could also be related to Green's concept of inherent meanings in so far as they pertain to the technicalities of musical production and theory. He suggests that much of what occurs in the classrooms is incomplete, and as such the pupils are not celebrated by their musical experiences in school. Knowing about and knowing how are only partial elements within the whole. Having defined these knowledge domains, he goes on to suggest that complete understanding can only be gained through participation through music's three central activities: through listening, composing and performing.

Reimer's (1989, 2003) writings have for many years formed the basis for music education development in the USA, although more recently they have come under attack for overlooking the importance of social context within musical meaning and experience, and for implicitly down-valuing non-Western, non-classical musics. However what is of relevance here, is that he similarly proposes a four-element structure to musical experience in the classroom. This entails a knowing within, knowing how, which is then enhanced by knowing about and knowing why. These components form the basis to his philosophy of music education and contain four further sub-dimensions of feeling, creating, meaning and context. Musical meanings emerge as a result of direct musical experience which is initiated by the mind, body and feeling. The first dimension of *feeling* then emerges both from music's inherent

values as well as those which are culturally conditioned. The experience of music makes feelings more intense and meaningful. Music, according to Reimer; educates feelings.

His second element, *creating* exists at all levels and forms of musical experience, whether through listening, playing or composing or any form of musical participation. He states that creativity requires the submission of the self to the music in the search for musical meaning. The third element of *meaning* is defined as: 'everything a person experiences when involved with it' (p. 165). While Reimer does not actually define what meaning is, he states that the important issue is not so much *what* musical meaning is, but rather what the individual should become involved with, *how* one should become involved with musical experience.

What is the link here between Swanwick and Reimer on one hand, and Apple and Jorgensen on the other hand?

Apple (1990) argues that the school curriculum ought to embrace a process by which the pupils experience the subject matter from personal interaction with the subject, rather than gained as second hand information from an authority perspective. Moreover, Jorgensen (2003) adds, this process ought to incorporate a constant dialogue between teachers and pupils alike, which involves an interaction invested with meaning from all players:

Curriculum is not just a set of topics that the teacher sets out and reviews during the instructional process...it is a dialogue between teacher and student-and student and student-that is invested with meaning for all concerned. Student's interest, abilities, and ideas are enlisted in what becomes

a life-changing process charged with intrinsic meaning rather than characterised by extrinsic rewards and products. (p. 81)

According to Jorgensen (1997), *knowledge as situated* emerges from the life experiences and encounters of individuals with others. Knowledge therefore constitutes a plurality of possible meanings. By ignoring music's function, use and meaning for pupils, music education remains out of touch with the real world - with everyday experiences - lived and conceptualised, a point to which number of authors including McClary (1991, 2000), Walker (1998), Green, (2001, 2005b), Jorgensen (2003), Kushner (1999) and Knight (2003) attribute music's unpopularity amongst pupils. By offering an opportunity for pupils to recognise their musical meanings and lived experiences within the classroom, they take part in a community of learning, or as Giroux (1993) proposes, they are able *to create a vision of community*. Students then gain ownership over what constitutes knowledge and their voices and meanings and experiences become validated.

Aesthetic theories, with their claims that musical meaning and value transcend time, place, context and human purpose and usefulness, fail to account for the fullest range of meanings inherent in individuals and collective musical actions. Such theories fall short of providing an adequate rationale for music-making or music teaching. Instead, all music must be seen as intimately tied to social and cultural contexts and conditions. The theory and practice of music education must account for this situatedness of music and music-making. Music educators must have, therefore, a theoretical foundation that unites the actions of producing music with the various contexts of those actions, so that musical meaning appropriately includes all of music's humanizing and concrete functions (Swanwick and Taylor, 1982, p. 1).

Traditional learning is essentially based on traditional values and a shared understanding of the distinct roles of the teacher and the pupil. The teacher is the authoritative figure, the one with knowledge to be passed down to those who have no knowledge. The majority of pupils will be excluded if music education maintains the reproduction and affirmation of those musical values that represent a different time, age, race, gender and social class to a good proportion of the pupil population. It simply continues to exclude and alienate. Learning occurs when the material is grounded within an exploration of the pupil's knowledge and meanings. This allows for integration and expansion.

### **POLICY VS. PRACTICE: CONFORMING OR CONFLICTING MEANINGS?**

In essence, the pupils' curriculum was not dissimilar to the philosophy upon which the NC is based. The discrepancy comes about with the manner in which the NC is implemented into practice, as revealed through their discussion of music in school. The NC explicitly states:

Music is a powerful, unique form of communication that can change the way pupils feel, think and act. It brings together intellect and feeling and enables personal expression, reflection and emotional development. As an integral part of culture, past and present, it helps pupils understand themselves and relate to others, forging important links between the home, school and the wider world. The teaching of music develops pupils' ability to listen and appreciate a wide variety of music and to make judgements about musical quality. It encourages active involvement in different forms of amateur music making, both individual and communal, developing a sense of group identity and togetherness. It also increases self-discipline and creativity, aesthetic sensitivity and fulfilment (QCA, 1999, p. 162).

Furthermore:

When planning, teachers should set high expectations and provide opportunities for all pupils to achieve, including boys and girls, pupils with special educational needs, pupils with disabilities, pupils from all social and cultural backgrounds, pupils of different ethnic groups including travellers, refugees and asylum seekers, and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Teachers need to be aware that pupils bring to school different experiences, interests and strengths, which will influence the way in which they learn. Teachers should plan their approaches to teaching and learning so that all pupils can take part in lessons fully and effectively (QCA, 1999, p. 36).

Within these two statements, reference is made to each of the main issues identified as having been addressed by the pupils in this study. The statements allude to the importance of creating access to the pupils' layers of meaning, and highlight the importance of emotion and feeling, identity, communication and community, fun and creativity. Furthermore, the NC states that music in schools should develop and extend the pupils' own interests, which points to the necessity of the two-way dialogue of which the pupils speak.

The pupils speak about the desire to be treated as equals, respected and taken seriously. The National Curriculum explicitly states that schools ought, in their endeavour to educate all children, to support and incorporate the knowledge base, meanings and experience that each child brings into the classroom.

Without such a goal, we run the risk of alienating pupils from the classroom, as Campbell (1988) explains:



'The education children receive in school can support some of their outside enculturative learning, however. In fact, it must. Schools that divorce themselves from the challenges of the real world of everyday children, that scale back and simplify beyond recognition the meaning of a subject, and that give little opportunity for children to apply what they have mastered to new contexts cannot accomplish noble goals of transmitting and preserving heritage. Bright and well-informed young people are the result of schools that honor children's earlier and concurrent pathways of enculturative knowledge. Their teachers do not assume this knowledge to be inferior but find ways to associate what children know with what they need to know' (*op. cit.*, p. 180).

The pupils in this study strongly believed that they learn best when their own meanings, experiences and realities are given space within the classroom.

## CONCLUSION

The findings that emerged from the data empirically support several of the hypothetical and theoretical constructs presented in the literature. As summarised in the previous chapters, music in school can become unpopular amongst the pupils when they are not interested. According to their own descriptions, pupils are turned off when there is a lack of connection. The pupils revealed repeatedly that they wanted to learn but lacked the connection. This reference to connection is essential and brings together all of the previous findings. Connection relates to the level of access to their layers of meaning, identified earlier. In essence, their ideal music educational classroom acted as a gateway to meaning.

## **CHAPTER 8: LIMITATIONS, CONTRIBUTION AND OUTLOOK**

This chapter opens with a short overview of the main findings presented in the thesis, including some further critique of the research process and of the limitations of the study. Based on the pupils' stories, I then suggest recommendations for classroom policy and practice. This is followed by a discussion of potential areas for further research and my concluding reflections.

I must reiterate that the conceptions of the pupils within this study represent a sample of children from only two schools. I do not claim to have a universal portrait of contemporary secondary-school pupils. I have however, aimed to expand the empirical evidence which can contribute to an understanding of the relationship between young people and music in and out of school.

The pupils in this study revealed six conceptions of music. These conceptions (meanings) were inextricably linked to the value and function that music served in their lives; music was intimately related to their *being*. Music was instrumental in meeting certain personal, social and communal objectives.

The pupils' conceptions of music in school were unrelated to their conceptions of music in general. They perceived music in school as being instrumental in achieving particular musical aims which were founded within the tradition of western classical music. While some pupils who played an instrument formally and were considering taking music for GCSE seemed to have benefited most from music in school, all pupils remarked that they would like to have benefited more.

I was impressed at the level of critical thinking that the pupils in the study exhibited. Much to my surprise, the pupils stated that their dissociation from music in school was not restricted to the fact that classical music seems to dominate music education, but they were instead concerned with the *manner* in which the material was presented. They indicated that once 'a connection' was established, they would become open to learning, and to all sorts of music. In other words, they indicated that they felt they could establish a relationship with any type of music, as long it is presented in a manner to which they could relate. Indeed, this 'connection' can begin with the introduction of music with which they are familiar as a basis, as some pupils suggested. Other pupils indicated that this 'connection' could be established through associations, events and beliefs. In essence, they addressed what Green (1988, 2005a) has referred to as delineated meanings.

The pupils' most meaningful musical experiences were those in which their meanings were accessed; where there was a link between the personal, the social and the communal spaces and where the pupils could identify with the moment. This is what they desired within the classroom. They desired a classroom which acted as a gateway to their musical meanings.

Music education is an important medium through which these meanings can be accessed and established. Those who shape the system, however, ought to acknowledge the cultural and historical process of reproduction within which they operate, and further how this reproduction limits, hinders or distorts musical value and its potential for enhancing life. This involves disrupting the dominant storylines, resisting the *status quo* and developing strategies that will enable pupils to become active agents in the process of music education.

The reason we cannot determine which of our decisions is good and which is bad is that in a given decision we can make only one decision; we are not granted a second, third or fourth life in which to compare various decisions.

(Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*)

The pupils' stories have raised a number of additional questions in my mind. The findings reveal that the pupils' discourses regarding their conceptions of music did not vary greatly. I consistently tried to find patterns of discourse between performers and listeners, for example, and between girls and boys. In hindsight, I realise that this was a rather superficial categorisation. While the focus was on their conceptions and not on the nature of their musical experiences, I was not in a position to be able to categorise them accordingly, as listeners or performers. How does one define being a listener, or being a performer? One pupil, for example, mentioned that he does not play music at all, but during his discussion he spoke about making up tunes and rapping to beats. I believe that once one begins to explore the nature of pupils' musical experiences, as distinct from their conceptions thereof, there will indeed be great variation in their discourses. An understanding of the *nature* of their musical experience outside of school for example would provide another perspective for gaining insight into their relationship with music. While this research was solely concerned with the various meanings and conceptions that they hold towards music in and out of school, this clearly would have been beyond the scope of the present study. While I feel confident to suggest that the research process was successful in addressing the stated research questions, and followed the principles laid out within the phenomenographic tradition, future research may be able to build upon these findings via other methodological means.

This present study has, I hope, contributed to knowledge in six main areas. *First*, as suggested in the literature, the 'disjuncture', or 'gap' between music in school and music out of school addressed above can only be solved by starting with the one common factor, that is, the pupils. By exploring the subjective views of the pupils, this study has attempted to create a link between the literature on young people and music out of school and the body of literature on young people and music in school.

*Second*, the pupils in this study confirmed the concerns revealed in the literature that pupils are often 'bored' or 'turned off' (Ross, 1995) by music in schools. The important factor for the pupils in 'turning them on' was 'finding a connection' and presenting the musical material in such a manner that the pupil can relate to and associate with. Their reference to 'finding a connection' was concerned with 'musical strategy' as opposed to musical content. Their ideal curriculum for music espoused much of what is practised within the informal learning sector where peer learning, dialogue between teacher and pupils, experimentation, listening and creativity are key ingredients (Green, 2001, 2005b; Jaffurs, 2004; Sönderman and Folkestad, 2004).

*Third*, while there was great variance in the nature of the musical experiences of the pupils in this study, the pupils' descriptions of what music meant to them all fell into six categories of description. I refer to these conceptions as musical meanings. Each of these meanings is inextricably linked to the value and purposes that music serves in their lives. Music was something intimately personal as well as social and 'communal' (to use their own words).

The pupils' descriptions of music in school revealed two categories of description, neither of which was related to their musical meanings outside of school, which signifies the disjuncture discussed earlier. For those pupils who had played an instrument through formal instruction, and who were considering taking music for

GCSE, music in school was perceived as assisting them to reach their musical goals. Those pupils who did not play an instrument formally found music in school to be meaningless and completely detached from their musical goals.

*Fourth*, the findings further suggest that musical meaning, as expressed by the pupils in the study, is found within what I have defined as three 'levels of interaction'. The first level I refer to as the personal level, where the individual has an intimate relationship to the music. This level is intimate, belongs to the individual and is not shared. The second level is social meaning, which is shared beyond the individual, personal level, and involves sharing music with friends. The third level I have referred to as the communal level, where meaning is shared and communicated beyond the personal and social into the wider community. Within this level, the pupils described music as being able to establish links across and beyond cultural boundaries.

*Fifth*, the pupils' ideal curriculum for music points to the importance of creating a classroom in which musical meaning is enhanced and confirmed. The pupils' ideal vision of the music curriculum did not at all come into conflict with the aims and basis formulated within the National Curriculum for music. While the pupils' curriculum and the National Curriculum revealed similar objectives, this suggests that the 'problem' may not lie within the 'conflicting meanings' or 'conflict of cultures', but instead in the manner and the strategies taken in the implementation of the common goals.

Regarding this implementation, Pitts (2001) calls for a closer 'collaboration' between research and practice in order to provide a strong basis upon which music education can be delivered. The notion of the 'pupil voice' can be equally applied to the classroom setting. The pupils in this study have revealed that they desire the

opportunity to talk to their teachers about their musical experiences outside of the classroom; they want the opportunity to share with their teachers and peers everything their musical lives entail. They desire the opportunity to talk about what they want, and how best they believe they can achieve it. This research has indicated that, once offered the opportunity to talk about what music means, pupils take ownership and are quite capable of revealing what they know and what they want.

This study also offers support to the phenomenographic notion that the quality of learning, what is learnt and how it is learnt, is based on the pupils' conceptions of the subject. An individual's conception of a particular subject can therefore inform us about the decisions pupils make about their learning, and the attitudes to learning that they hold.

*Finally*, in terms of classroom practice and policy, the insight gained from this research places us in a better position to fulfil the agenda espoused by the framework of the National Curriculum. Through this understanding, a new basis can be formulated for further research and investigation.

## CLASSROOM AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This study, while only presenting the views of a small number of pupils in one region within the United Kingdom, has pointed to a number of critical areas in which preliminary recommendations can be made. The inclusionary objectives contained within the National Curriculum indeed recognise the need to broaden the concept of what counts as music; however, active implementation of its goals is yet to be taken in some schools. An active (and radical) approach would entail starting from the bottom with the views of the pupils, rather than imposing goals from the top. It would entail teachers and policy makers challenging their own concepts of music making and participation, musical meaning and experience.

The pupils in this study have been offered the opportunity to reflect and share their conceptions of music within and outside of school. Furthermore, they were asked to design their own curriculum. They were very explicit about their ideas as to how they thought an appropriate curriculum should be implemented. Based on their responses, I propose the following *preliminary* recommendations for classroom practice:

*First*, supporting the notion of the *pupil voice*, discussed throughout this thesis, pupils should be offered the opportunity to discuss and reflect critically upon their musical experiences and meanings within the classroom. Inviting the pupils' voice into the classroom can provide a basis for learning for both pupils and teachers. Allowing for critical reflection enables assumptions and meanings to be challenged and makes way for new paths for learning.

*Second*, following on the first point, allowing pupils to demonstrate actively what they can do musically is a way of inviting the pupils' existing perspectives,



knowledge and skills into the classroom, and allowing them to participate on their terms. This can also provide a basis for learning. The pupils believe that music exists in everyone, to some degree. Music education should be centred on enhancing and expanding that musical knowledge.

*Third*, as Swanwick and Lawson (1999), Kushner (1999) and Knight (2003) have suggested, real musical experiences should form an integral part of their education, and should be used as a basis for learning. This would entail bringing the pupils to various performances, or having various musicians come into the classroom. Interaction with the real world is an important element of learning and motivation for the pupils.

*Fourth*, free instrumental tuition ought to be offered to those pupils who express an interest. Despite inclusionary efforts to open opportunities to pupils to take instrumental tuition, there is indication from the literature (confirmed in my study) that those pupils with formal musical training are still those who benefit most from music in education. Enabling all pupils to take instrumental tuition on the same basis invites the notion of inclusion and equality of opportunity.

*Fifth*, as Green (2001, 2005b) has suggested, group learning and collaboration ought to play an integral role. The pupils recognise that they learn best and are most motivated when they can learn from and with each other.

*Finally*, pupils recognise that teachers are often tentative to introduce popular forms of music into the classroom, as it does not fit into their own musical frame of knowledge. Teachers, like pupils, need to expand their own musical frame of knowledge, learn how to listen, and learn how to value music intrinsically for what it is. A broad idea and understanding of what exists is a starting point to approaching

the pupils. This should occur before the teacher enters the classroom. During teacher training, teachers ought to be sensitised towards the varied meanings and experiences of pupils.

## **OUTLOOK AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

However philosophy might come to clarity about musical meaning, and however effectively we in music education bring our philosophical and pedagogical expertise to bear to help our students 'act and perceive musically', their inner experience of music, their knowledge within and how, will inevitably be theirs, not ours, as it has to be and should be, just as for each of us. Finally, music will mean 'everything that a person experiences when involved with it', making of what music offers, and what we teachers attempt to enhance, what each student actually experiences (Reimer, 2003, p. 21).

This study has shown that, once pupils are offered the opportunity to reflect critically about the role of music in their lives and at school, they are quite capable of doing so. If our aim as music educators is to enhance musical experience and meaning for all pupils, then we ought to provide opportunities within the classroom that allow for meaning to be accessed. In meeting this objective, we need to listen to what the pupils have to say about the role that music plays in their lives and at school.

The findings that have emerged from the present study could be used as a basis for further inquiry. An examination of what music means to pupils in a variety of other settings, for example, could provide useful information. An interesting comparison may be to compare the conceptions of pupils from a range of different types of schools, for example, music-specialist colleges in which music plays a large role within the school context, compared to non-music specialist schools. Further enquiry

could include an investigation of how the activities mentioned by the pupils can provide a gateway to meaning across the three spaces as identified within this thesis.

These findings furthermore suggest that we as music educators ought to reconsider our positions within the rich and varied musical landscape in which our pupils live and participate on a daily basis. This will entail recognising our own conceptions and meanings which we attach to music and exploring how these may correspond or conflict with that of the pupils.

## CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

I feel deeply honoured to have been granted the opportunity to speak with the pupils about their conceptions of music. I felt very encouraged to see how seriously they approached this undertaking. I was most moved by their expressions of the empowerment that they felt. The notion of the pupil voice within research can be extremely beneficial. By the same token, the notion of the pupil voice within the classroom may be equally beneficial to both pupils and teachers.

In the ever-changing musical landscape in which we live today, there is a desperate need for us to reassess what our goals and aims are as music educators. Teacher training and the curriculum ought to be structured so as to respond to the current needs, meanings and experiences of young people today, and ought to be flexible to allow for change and growth. As so many of the pupils spoke about their favourite subject, we need to consider how music in school can facilitate these criteria.

Our pupils come to us from a rich world of music; their music – making and forms of participation are multifarious and extend beyond that which we have perhaps come to know as music.

Mina: Music is life and every human being will always have music in their life. So I think that music in school should be about developing the musical potential that every human being has. It should make us all more open and aware of everything that music has to offer different people in different times and cultures and places.

## APPENDICES

Appendix A: Introduction to the Pupils

Appendix B: Description of the Pupils

Appendix C: Schemes of Work (School 1)

Appendix D: Schemes of Work (School 2)

## **APPENDIX A: BASIC STRUCTURE OF INTRODUCTION TO THE PUPILS**

Hi! As all of you know I am will be conducting research at your school for the next few months. I am very interested in finding out what music really means to you and what sort of music you enjoy most. I would like to interview those of you who choose to take part in this project for a couple of times during the term so that we could get to know each other a bit and just talk about music. For my research I will not use your real names so that I will be the only one to know what you said. So, I will let you decide which names you want to use for the research.

**APPENDIX B: DESCRIPTION OF THE PUPILS**

34 pupils are presented in this thesis. The number comprised an even gender-balance and a variety in terms of musical background and achievement.

Two of the children were of Afro-Caribbean heritage, one pupil was of African heritage, one pupil was half-African and half British, one pupil was Indian, one was Chinese, one pupil was half Pakistan origin and half British. 27 were of British descent. Of the selected pupils, 9 had musical instruments at home and took formal lessons, of those 9, three of them were considering taking music for GCSE level. 7 pupils had at taken at least one year of formal instrumental training in the past but had given it up. 16 of the pupil had never taken formal lessons. Two of the pupils played instruments informally and had their own bands.

**List of Pupils: School 1**

Bob

Kyoko

Joey

Mina

Andy

Beatrice

Karly

Sally

Abby

Tim

Radhika

Emily

Karen

Ann-Sophie

Sola

Janett

Halina



## List of Pupils: School 2

Mathilda

Xian

Mary

Nadia

Omar

Melissa

Mischa

Liza

Thomas

Richard

Erik

Candice

Stephan

Mike

Jonathan

Henry

Gerald

## APPENDIX C: SCHEMES OF WORK: SCHOOL 1

SUBJECT: Music YEAR GROUP: MODULE

LEARNING MODULE TITLE: Music and 9 6  
Ritual (African Drumming)

AIMS:

To develop:

- An appreciation of music from a different culture along with an understanding of the behaviours, rituals and nuances associated with that type of music.
- the roles of the various elements (pulse, pitch, rhythm, dynamics, silence, timbre and texture) which combine to make effective compositions through discussion, listening and appraising and performing.
- More advanced performing skills, and skills in composing, listening and appraising

SUBJECT OBJECTIVES (including level related expectations):

By the end of the module, all pupils will have:

- Participated in class rhythm games (call and response etc)
- Participated in a African drumming-based composition project
- Sung a simple African song (in harmony)
- Carried out some of their own research into: the significance of Music in African culture, the inter-relatedness of Music and dance, other general characteristics of African Music

ASSOCIATED SUBJECT VOCABULARY

Indigenous, tribal, ritual, ceremony, pulse, regular, off-beat, syncopation, call and

response, djembe, marimbula, rain stick

#### ASSOCIATED LEARNING VOCABULARY

Listen, Describe, Compare, Explain, Explore, Discuss, Demonstrate

#### FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

- Ongoing. Subject leader gives students feedback on how to improve their performances / compositions throughout practical sessions.
- Students engage in self- / peer-assessment when reviewing videoed performances of their compositions.

#### SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

- Students' understanding is tested regularly by the subject leader through various questioning techniques.
- Students learn and then perform (individually) a short rhythmic piece (taken and adapted from a longer piece of music from Burundi). Students are given individual marks for their performances
- The poster / booklet that students produce at the end of the module reflects their depth of understanding and is marked by the subject leader and given a comment (formative).

#### LEARNING STYLES (including rationale for seating plans)

Visual – Use of number grids used for teaching syncopation, pictures and posters of authentic ceremonies and instruments.

Aural – Use of audio recordings and classroom instruments to provide examples of practices and techniques.

#### ELEMENT OF CHOICE:

- Students make creative choices when composing their ritual
- Students choose the design format for their posters/booklets.

Kinaesthetic – Marching and clapping for pulse, rhythm and syncopation.

MEDIA LITERACY & ICT:	CITIZENSHIP	X-CURRICULAR / EXTERNAL LINKS
Use of computers to research and present posters.	Exploration of a different culture  Discussion skills	N/A

WORK RELATED LEARNING:	SMSC	RISK ASSESSMENT
N/A	Students explore how they as composers can manipulate and combine the various elements of music as a means of self-expression, creativity & persuasion.	Subject leader to advise students on how to use equipment (instruments) appropriately  Students to undertake practical sessions under the supervision of the subject leader.

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<b>SUBJECT:</b> Music	<b>YEAR GROUP:</b>	<b>MODULE</b>
<b>LEARNING MODULE TITLE:</b> Minimalism	9	7

#### AIMS

To develop:

- An understanding of the Minimalist style and an appreciation of the resourcefulness required to create interesting and successful pieces in this idiom.
- Skills in performance, composition, listening and appraising.
- Pupils' ability to make imaginative and creative responses and to understand the importance of being able to do this

#### ASSOCIATED SUBJECT VOCABULARY

Repetition, riff, ostinato, phase technique, canon, syncopation, timbre, sonority, pitched percussion, xylophone, metallophone, glockenspiel, vibraphone.

#### ASSOCIATED LEARNING VOCABULARY

Listen, Describe, Compare, Explain, Explore, Perform, Compose, Demonstrate

#### FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

- Ongoing. Subject leader gives students feedback on how to improve their performances / compositions throughout practical sessions.
- Students engage in self- / peer-assessment when reviewing videoed performances of their compositions.

## SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

- Students awarded individual levels of attainment at end of the Minimalist composition project

### LEARNING STYLES (including rationale for seating plans)

Visual – Images of pitched percussion instruments.

Aural – Use of audio recordings and classroom instruments to model ideas (e.g. the phase technique)

Kinaesthetic – Performing / composing activities within this unit of work enable kinaesthetic learners to develop understanding through doing.

### ELEMENTS OF CHOICE:

Students make creative choices when composing their Minimalist pieces

### MEDIA LITERACY & CITIZENSHIP

#### MEDIA ICT:

N/A

- Discussion skills
- Learning to work in a group

### X-CURRICULAR / EXTERNAL LINKS

N/A

LEARNING MODULE TITLE:	YEAR GROUP:	MODULE
The Popular song since 1960 / Song-writing	9	8

#### AIMS

To develop:

- An understanding and appreciation of: popular song structures, typical chord sequences, how music technology is used the song as a vehicle for self-expression.
- Performance skills (especially singing)
- Composing skills
- Listening and appraising skills

#### ASSOCIATED SUBJECT VOCABULARY

Soprano, alto, baritone, chorus, riff, folk, blues, rock, gospel, ballad,

#### ASSOCIATED LEARNING VOCABULARY

Listen, Describe, Compare, Explain, Demonstrate, Perform, Compose, Sing.

#### FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

Ongoing. Subject leader gives students feedback on how to improve their performances throughout practical sessions.

#### SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

Each student given an individual level at the end of the project.

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**LEARNING STYLES** (including rationale for seating plans)

Visual – Use of stave notation

Aural – Use of audio recordings and voice to develop and consolidate understanding

Kinaesthetic – Performing activities within this unit of work enable kinaesthetic learners to develop understanding through doing. Students clap and speak rhythms (using the Kodaly time names)

**ELEMENTS OF CHOICE:**

- For this final project students choose who they are going to work with
- Students make creative choices when composing their songs



## APPENDIX D: SCHEMES OF WORK: SCHOOL 2

SUBJECT: Music	YEAR GROUP:	MODULE
		NUMBER 4
LEARNING MODULE TITLE: The Blues	9	

### AIMS:

To develop:

- An understanding of the historical and cultural context that gave rise to the blues and an appreciation of the various styles that grew out of it (Jazz, Rhythm and Blues, Rock 'n' Roll etc.)
- An understanding of how chords are "built" and in turn an understanding of the 12-bar chord progressions
- Skills in improvisation (improvising over a fixed chord progression)
- Other sophisticated performing skills (including swinging rhythms) and skills in listening and appraising

### ASSOCIATED SUBJECT VOCABULARY

Slavery, exploitation, discontent, harmonica, acoustic guitar, chord progression, triad, root, 12-bar blues, vamping / comping, improvisation, blue note, pentatonic, head, turn-around bar

### ASSOCIATED LEARNING VOCABULARY

Listen, Describe, Compare, Explain, Explore, Discuss, Demonstrate, Perform, Improvise, Compose

### FORMATIVE / SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

Students' understanding is tested regularly by the subject leader through various questioning techniques. The poster / booklet that students produce at the end of the module reflects their depth of understanding and is marked by the subject leader and given a comment (formative).

**LEARNING STYLES** (including rationale for seating plans)

**ELEMENT OF CHOICE:**

Visual – The “head” of “Bag’s Groove” (blues melody) is displayed for students to read from.

Aural – Use of audio recordings and classroom instruments to familiarise students with the genre and to provide examples of blues-specific techniques

Kinaesthetic – Performing / composing activities within this unit of work enable kinaesthetic learners to develop understanding through doing.

- Students make creative choices when improvising
- Students choose the design format for their Blues posters/booklets.

**MEDIA LITERACY & ICT:**

**CITIZENSHIP**

**X-CURRICULAR / EXTERNAL LINKS**

Use of computers to facilitate research and presentation of posters/booklets.

Discussion skills

School jazz/blues band (“Mad Hatters”) promoted during practical performance sessions.

LEARNING MODULE TITLE:	YEAR GROUP:	MODULE
Programme Music ("Scheherazade" and "Carnival of the Animals")	9	5

#### AIMS

To develop:

- An understanding of how Music can be used to evoke an image or tell a story through use of specific techniques / devices.
- Skills in performance, composition, listening and appraising.
- Pupils' ability to make imaginative and creative responses and to understand the importance of being able to do this

#### ASSOCIATED SUBJECT VOCABULARY

Programme music, Suite, Miniature, Theme, leitmotif, fanfare, major scale, dorian mode

#### ASSOCIATED LEARNING VOCABULARY

Listen, Describe, Compare, Explain, Explore, Perform, Compose, Demonstrate

#### FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

- Ongoing. During introductory sessions (where students compose short themes associated with the "Scheherazade" story) the subject leader gives students individual feedback on the successful aspects of their compositions and suggests ways of developing ideas further.
- Subject leader continues to give students feedback and explain how to improve their performances / compositions throughout the practical "Carnival of the Animals" sessions.

- Students engage in self- / peer-assessment when reviewing videoed performances of their Carnival of the animals compositions.

#### SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

- Students awarded individual levels of attainment at end of Carnival of the Animals composition project

#### LEARNING STYLES (including rationale for seating plans)

Aural – Use of audio recordings to provide examples of the genre, and classroom instruments used to model module-specific techniques)

Kinaesthetic – Performing / composing activities within this unit of work enable kinaesthetic learners to develop understanding through doing.

#### ELEMENTS OF CHOICE:

- Students make creative choices when composing their Animal pieces
- Students design their own posters explaining how they composed their pieces.

LEARNING MODULE TITLE:	YEAR GROUP:	MODULE
Music and media (exploring how music is used)	9	13

#### AIMS

To develop an understanding of how music is used to create an intended effect

**ACTIVITIES** Introduce the unit by exploring how music is ever present in our lives and is used to influence our thoughts. Watch and listen to a number of scenes from films or TV programmes and analyse how images/emotions/situations are enhanced and how our perception of the image is influenced. Discuss the use of resources (instrumental colour), structure, lyrics/words (if any), and all other musical and compositional devices. Ask questions, eg What do these films/programmes gain by their use of music? What would be their effect without music?

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